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THE
METHODIST
PULPIT

MANUEL

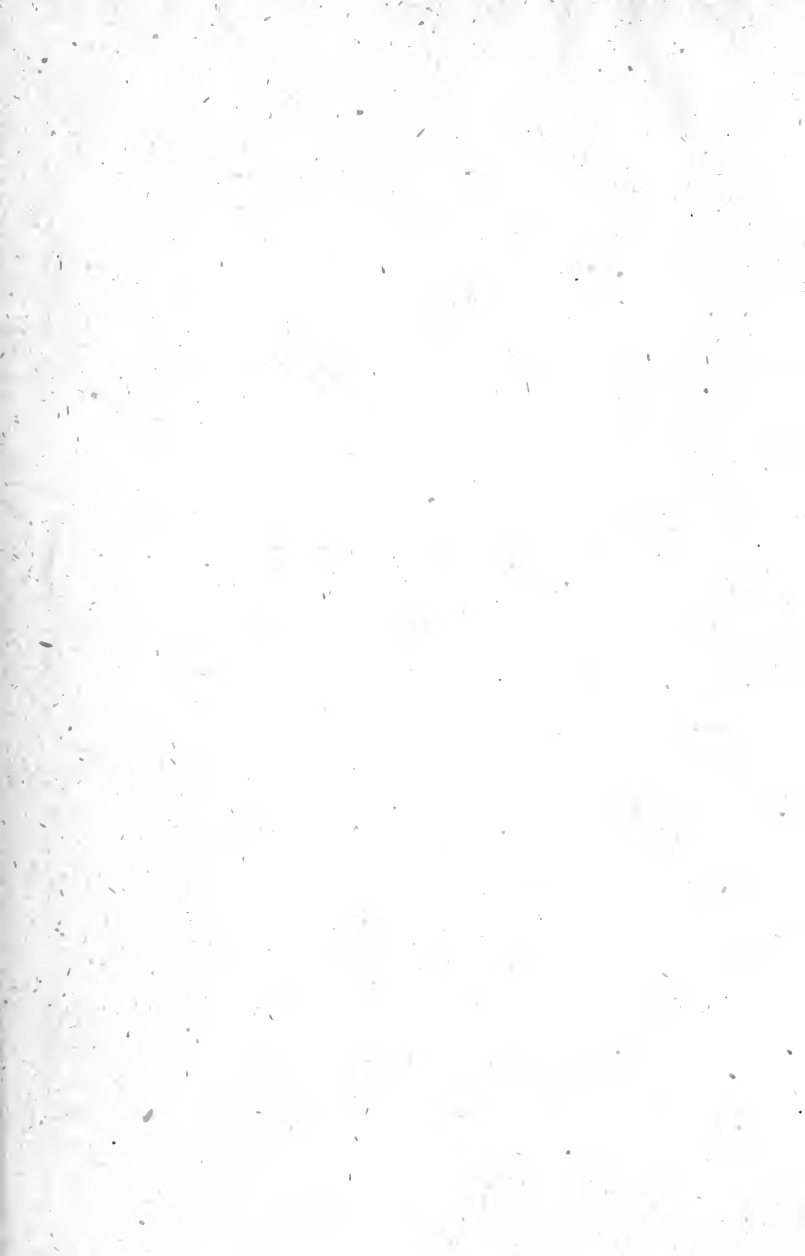


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REV. LUKE H. WISEMAN, M.A.,
President of the Wesleyan Conference.





THE METHODIST PULPIT.

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THE METHODIST PULPIT.

How beauteous are their feet,
Who stand on Sion's hill ;
Who bring salvation in their tongues,
And words of peace reveal !

How blessed are our ears,
That hear this joyful sound,
Which kings and prophets waited for,
And sought, but never found !

“HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER ?”—*St. Paul.*

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

IN Methodism, from its beginning, preaching has been regarded as a thing of very high relative value. John Wesley had the conviction that his own leading duty was to call sinners to repentance and to edify and aid believers, by the preaching of the Gospel ; and his whole course, in public and in private, was marked by constant reference to this conviction. Those whom he gathered around him for assistance in his great work were known to all the world as “preachers of the Gospel.”

[The pulpit of Methodism has been the centre around which all other parts of its organisation have gathered ; and, accordingly, Methodist places of worship have uniformly, with few exceptions, been constructed with special reference to the furtherance of the objects of preaching.]

We refrain here from any comparison of the Methodist preaching of past times with that of our own day. Times greatly differ ; and the men of to-day are, we trust, such as the peculiarities of the age demand. It is a great thing for a man to be fully adapted to his own times.

The contents of this volume will speak for themselves. What some look for in printed sermons will not be found here ; but what those desire in sermons

who have learned to value a clear and vigorous statement of the things so surely believed among all sections of Methodists, will be found in the following discourses.

The volume will be adapted for profitable perusal in the closet, helpful to lay preachers and others, and convenient as a memento of the excellent ministers who have furnished the discourses; and we trust it will be a pleasure to the preachers themselves that their hearers are thus enabled to refer to means by which there has been conveyed to them good of the highest order.

Some of these sermons may not have, as here presented, all that precision of expression or all that fulness of statement that their authors might in other circumstances have given them; but they have been revised with very much care, and with constant mental reference to what the preachers themselves would have desired.

The volume will in its degree represent the Methodist preaching of different denominations and of different lands. It is hoped that this peculiarity will distinguish each successive volume of the *Methodist Pulpit*.

The encouragement accorded to this publication has been such, that the proprietors have believed themselves to be supplying a felt want.

29, *Farringdon Street*,

London, August 30, 1872.

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THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

TO THE

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE,

LONDON, 1872.



AT the one hundred and twenty-ninth Wesleyan Methodist Conference, begun in City Road Chapel, London, on Wednesday, July 31, 1872, the Rev. Luke H. WISEMAN, one of whose Sermons is contained in this volume, and of whom we also here present a portrait, was elected to the office of President, by an unusually large vote. During the previous year Mr. Wiseman had been sent to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, as the representative of the British Conference, and had also visited the Conference of the Methodist Church in Canada. The Canadian Conference had appointed him its representative to the Conference in London. These facts account for the following excellent and judicious speech, which was delivered at the usual open session of the Conference on the day of its commencement,

and was received with great interest and much applause by a very large assemblage of hearers. The ex-President, for the time, re-occupied the chair, and introduced the speaker with most appropriate words.

My Christian Friends and Brethren,—It will not be necessary, I apprehend, nor will it be expected on the part of the Conference, that I should do more this evening than just report the chief matters connected with my mission. I will speak, first of all, of that with which I was more especially charged by yourself, sir, under the circumstances you have named, to the Conference of the United States of America, and afterwards of a visit to our friends in Canada, which causes me to stand here to-night in the capacity of their representative to you.

With regard to the former of these matters I may just state, that a few days after receiving the intimation which you have mentioned to the Conference, I set sail for New York, and arrived there all safe and well on the 30th of April, the evening before the opening of the General Conference at Brooklyn. On arriving on the landing-stage in New York, I at once recognised, among the crowd of people who were waiting to see the passengers land, my old friend and yours, and my co-delegate to the United States, Mr. Punshon. He had arrived that morning for the same purpose that had brought me from London, and besides Mr. Punshon I was met by a deputation representing the American General Conference, who showed me every possible respect and consideration on landing, and conducted me to one of the most hospitable homes that ever it was my pleasure and privilege to enter, at which place I stayed during the time of my temporary residence in New York.

I found, however, that, although the Conference commenced the next morning, the fraternal delegates, as they are there called, were not expected to attend for some few days. The time spent in what is termed organisation of the Conference extends over several days, and during that period persons delegated by outside bodies are not expected to be present.

The Conference there, I may say, is open to the public. I therefore, instead of spending four or five days in watching the process of organisation, took a short trip with my good friends Punshon, Stephenson, and one or two other English friends, to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, and returned to New York in time to preach at St. Paul's Church on the Sunday morning, and in another in the evening, and then to present myself in due time at the Conference. I had, however, after the Sunday, one or two days longer to wait according to their usages, and availed myself of that period to look at the Conference in the light of a spectator.

You are well aware, dear brethren, that this General Conference of the American Methodist Episcopal Church is not annual, like our own, for it meets only once in four years. You are also aware that they have Annual Conferences of their churches to the number of about sixty or seventy, but these are something like our district meetings, in a larger way, where the business is chiefly administrative. All the stationing is done there. The bishops and presiding elders make all the appointments; and the Conference is informed what those appointments are. There is no appeal; the Stations are not discussed in these Annual Conferences at all. Observe, I am not commenting, I am merely reporting the facts. All questions referring to ministerial character, and to the administration of the internal affairs of the churches, are discussed at these Annual Conferences; but they have no legislative power. All the legislative power belongs to the General Conference, which is held once in four years, and which consists of representative persons from every one of the Annual Conferences, in the proportion of one representative to every thirty ministers; so that we saw at Brooklyn just one-thirtieth of the ministerial staff of the Church. In addition to these we also saw a body of laymen, who were introduced for the first time. The number of these was about a quarter of the clerical members of the Conference. They also came as representatives, and attended with great regularity.

To me it was quite impossible to distinguish the laity from the clericals. The American brethren do not see the necessity of wearing white neckties or any kind of distinction by which to be known from laymen. There was also a large number

of spectators—I must say rather too large for the comfortable transaction of business—not that they were at all disorderly; they were as quiet as a crowd of from 1,000 to 2,000 spectators could be expected to be; but they did interfere to some extent with the quiet and order that is desirable, more especially in a legislative assembly.

The Conference was not held in a place of worship; for there was no place of worship large enough to hold the body of spectators. The number of the Conference itself was just half the number assembled in this place to-day. We see here eight hundred. At Brooklyn we saw four hundred, representing the different Conferences; but the body of spectators was so large that a large music-hall, called the Royal Academy of Music, was engaged for the occasion. It is, in fact, a theatre, and it did look a little incongruous to see this dignified ecclesiastical assembly in such a place. But, of course, the eye soon gets used to that kind of thing, and our friends across the water are not perhaps so sensitive to the sacredness of places as we are in “superstitious” England.

On the appointed day your representatives, that is to say, Mr. Punshon and myself, were received, as also the representatives of various other bodies; one representing the great Presbyterian Church of the United States, another representing the Congregationalists, others representing different sections of the Methodist family in the United States; for you will understand that it is there as it is here; Methodism is broken up into several distinct associations, of which one is older and considerably larger than all the rest. As in England, so in America, with this difference, that the smaller of these in the United States bear a much smaller proportion to the parent body than in the old country. There were present representatives from the Methodist Conferences of Canada, Nova Scotia, and other places too numerous for me to mention.

I delivered an address, which was, I believe, reported in the papers here, and to which I need not further allude. That was followed by an address from Mr. Punshon, in which he referred, in terms of glowing and feeling eloquence, to the great and noble men whom the Church of America had lost during the last few years, and also to the great and mighty prospects of extension which lay before them. That being

done, we waited a few days longer, and listened to their deliberations; and after as long a stay as circumstances would permit, we were furnished, by the courtesy of the presiding bishop, with an opportunity of familiarly taking our leave, and departed amid the kind salutations and congratulations of the brethren. That, sir, is a brief statement of the matters of fact connected with the representation to which you have referred.

[I may just say a few words to the Conference—which may be information to some—with regard to the differences which exist between the Methodism of the Episcopal Church of the United States and our own. These differences really are very considerable, not in point of doctrine, but in point of government and administration. For instance, they have no quarterly tickets of membership, and they have no periodical visitation of classes by the pastor. All that has long ceased as a matter of fact. The ministers do visit and meet the classes occasionally by way of counsel and encouragement; but what I mean is, that there is no arranged plan; and that it is not part of the minister's duty at a specified time periodically to visit the members, and renew their tickets, and inquire into their spiritual welfare. Again, all pecuniary qualification, all pecuniary requirement, is entirely done away with in the case of church membership. There is no ticket money or class money. All that is completely swept away; so that the class-meeting there is, in one respect, a very different thing from what it is in the old country.]

Then, again, the reception of members is somewhat different from ours. On one occasion, I happened to be present at a service in a small town, and had an opportunity of seeing how members are admitted. At the morning service the pastor of the place announced that in the evening two men, whose names he mentioned, would be admitted to the church, and that they would be required to be present. Accordingly, at the evening service, after the second hymn, these two young men were called upon. They answered to their names, and came forward to the communion place. The minister went down and read to them two or three questions, which are printed in the Book of Discipline. The first question was to this effect, whether they were prepared to take upon them-

selves the vows made for them at their baptism, and to acknowledge their own spiritual responsibilities. Another question referred to their personal experience, requiring of them a statement respecting their spiritual life and convictions, carefully worded. The third was a question whether they would conform in future to the usages and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. All these questions being answered by the candidates, the minister gave to each of them the right hand of fellowship, and said they were now members of the Methodist Episcopal Church; that membership would last for life, unless they resigned, or so misconducted themselves as to necessitate their being put away.

Such is the system, which, you will see, is altogether different from ours, and which approaches more nearly to that of Congregationalism, so far as regards the status of members. Although they are advised to meet in class, and a great many of them do so, yet it is not required as a test of continuing in the Society. If I were asked whether I approved of their system, I should answer that it would be highly indecorous in a person just going to a great country like that for a few weeks, to pronounce any very positive opinion; but I am prepared to say that, although the surface extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church is wonderfully great, yet, from the inquiries I had the opportunity of making, and from the facts that came before me, I should not be very hasty in recommending any similar system for our own country.

In the great cities of the East one does not see the power and vitality of Methodism to the same extent as they are seen in the cities of the South and the vast regions of the West. A stranger going to New York may walk about for a long time, and not hear or see anything of Methodism, as a stranger coming to London might have a difficulty, unless guided, in finding our places of worship. Sad that it should be so; but so it is. It is so in the metropolis of England, and it is so in the greatest city of the United States of America. But in some large cities further South our cause is wonderfully strong.

In Baltimore, in a population of about 200,000 persons, there are more than 55 Methodist churches, nearly all of which support a minister each. In Washington the propor-

tion is equally great. Methodism in the West is a great power.

Both in the United States and in Canada they call their sacred edifices churches. They never speak of chapels; but at one place where I was invited to preach I saw written up over a door, "To the chapel." When I went in, I found it was a very small room used for prayer-meetings. They had heard, through the papers, of course, of the effort we are making to build fifty new chapels in London, and they thought very little of it, because their idea of chapels was such as I have mentioned. They thought we were going to put up fifty little home mission places, and did not see any great reason why we should blow our trumpets so loud, and make such a fuss about it. Their opinion changed when I explained to them our use of the word "chapel," so different from theirs.

On leaving Brooklyn I made the best possible use of the remaining fortnight, and went far away across the American continent, where I got to my *ultima Thule*, the city of Omaha, in Nebraska. I met a gentleman connected with the railway, who offered me a pass as far West as I liked to go, free of all expense. "For," said he, "we wish strangers from the old country to see the wonderful land that is being opened up there." I very much regretted that I could not avail myself of the courtesy of this railway official; but I did go far enough to wonder and become amazed at the country which is being opened up there. There is nothing very inviting to the eye; it is as flat as a table for 500 miles together. There are no hills such as make the blood of a Highlander stir within him when he sees them; but the soil is exceedingly rich; it can be cultivated with very little trouble; and there is no necessity for those expensive processes which in this country render the cultivation of the soil so serious a matter. I saw more than once a couple of very small horses—the two together would not make a good English dray-horse—drawing a plough, and fastened to the plough was a harrow; nothing more was needed. Cultivation in that way can be cheaply and easily done.

It is a wonderful home and shelter that Providence seems to have prepared for the relief of the over-stocked countries in this northern part of Europe. But men who go there must

take two or three things with them. They must take a good constitution ; a love for hard work ; temperate, sober habits ; and, if they have got them, two or three strong boys. They must also have one or two hundred pounds of hard cash in their pocket after all expenses are paid. Provided with these things, and with the blessing of God, it is almost impossible that a man going to that Western country, if he understands anything of the cultivation of the soil, should fail in acquiring before very long the proprietorship of a hundred or two of acres of the richest land in the world, and a competency for his family. It is a wonderful country ; and there our Methodist Church is doing its work in a way that calls for liveliest gratitude to God.

I had now left Mr. Punshon, who had duties in Canada ; and I went on with my son to this western part. We had seen Chicago, which has risen up with wonderful rapidity from its ruins, and went to the great university of the North-West. We went across the prairies for some 500 or 600 miles, until we came to the State of Nebraska, where the wonderfully active little city Omaha has risen up within the last five or six years. A few years ago there was nothing at all ; now some of the traders are doing from £200,000 to £250,000 a-year. They have got tramways through the streets, though of rather a rough description ; and there are signs of life and activity which are wonderful to witness. There is one great bridge across the Missouri at which a number of railways converge, so that Omaha, on the other side of the river, is a sort of general depôt for all people coming from the East.

As soon as I arrived I went into the city, and made inquiries for the Methodist Church. I found the doors open, between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning on a week-day ; I heard singing going on, and saw a pleasant, comfortable-looking brother, who, if he had had a white necktie on, might have been the superintendent of one of our good, comfortable country circuits. I felt my heart take to him from his very look. Over his head was a motto, "Welcome, strangers ;" and he was speaking to two young men, who evidently were strangers, and I judged that, like myself, they had arrived by the morning train. I waited my turn, and then he went at once to the point by remarking, "Are you connected with any portion of the Church of Christ ?" Well, I thought, that is

business. Here is a man who goes straight to his work. And after a little while I told him who I was, and his heart seemed to overflow.

He said : " I stand an hour or two every morning after the arrival of the train, and direct the passengers where they wish to go, and also try to speak a word for the good of their souls. And if they are not disposed to receive that, I give them a little friendly advice as to the best methods of procedure, and how to keep out of bad company. My wife is in the other room, and she does the females." He asked me if I would preach, and conduct a prayer-meeting, and attend a sewing-meeting, all of which pleasant invitations I was compelled to decline.

I merely mention these facts to show the practical common-sense activity on the part of our brethren in those Western States, which when one has seen, one ceases to wonder at the rapid spread of the Methodist Episcopal Church all over that country.

Then, sir, coming back to the city of Detroit, one crosses the wide river and finds oneself in Canada. The train by which you cross goes right upon the ferry-boat with the passengers inside it, and you keep your seats in your carriages while the ferry-boat, train, and engine, and everything else, are being taken across the river, a mile or two wide ; and then you start off again as if nothing had happened.

Now in Canada there is also a wonderful extent of country. It may not be known to you all that British America is larger than the United States by 120,000 square miles ; but a very large portion of the territory is a kind of ice-house, as two or three brethren in this congregation, for instance, brother Barnley, could tell you. They could tell you more of those ice-bound regions than I can. The whole country is very vast, and is opening up very rapidly. There is the valley of the Saskatchewan, with millions of acres of land as productive, as cheap, and which, in a short time, will be as accessible—when certain railway arrangements are complete—as those prairie lands of the West to which I have alluded. There is the vast province of Manitoba, equal to the extent of France, Spain, and Portugal, in general a beautifully fertile country, and with a climate that is not exceptionally severe. Then there is the great district of British Columbia, 3,000

miles from Montreal, where the Conference was held. Ontario, I was told, has increased in population as rapidly as the States of the Union during the last few years.

I was surprised, in the course of a run from Windsor to Quebec, 500 miles, at seeing the vast influence exercised in Canada by the Methodist Church. The churches there are spacious, and, I was informed, well attended; and the ministers, as you have learned from the figures, are very numerous in proportion to the population. In Toronto, with a population of 50,000 or 60,000 people, there are seven large Methodist churches. One of them is very large indeed, half as spacious again as this chapel. I allude to the new Metropolitan Church, built principally through the exertions of Mr. Punshon. I had the privilege of preaching in that church, and it certainly is, so far as I have seen—and I had the opportunity of seeing some of the principal church edifices connected with our body in the United States—especially internally, the first Methodist church in the world. It has cost a great deal of money, but it seems really to answer well, and there is a blessing resting upon it. The people speak of it as Mr. Punshon's church, and well they may; for it would not have been called into existence but for him. I may just state that in, perhaps, about a year's time, we may expect him back again in this country.]

Reference was made in the address to the Cobourg University. That is an institution of great importance in connection with our church in Canada. I had the privilege of being present on the Convocation-day, and saw the degrees conferred. There were a large number of medical degrees—thirty or forty degrees of doctor of medicine. Altogether there are about 300 students in actual work in that college, and at the head of it is a man whom I hope we shall see before very long in England—Dr. Nelles.

The Convocation was quite a brilliant affair, and some friends from England were present. Among the rest the Rev. T. Bowman Stephenson, who is himself a graduate of the London University, gave them some good advice, which I trust they will not forget. Mr. Stephenson's visit was very much welcomed in different parts of Canada, and the Children's Home, on the business of which he more particularly went there, received a substantial amount of support.

The appearance of the Conference at Montreal was very much like an English Conference; in fact, but for the size—about 300 being present—and the absence of well-known faces that one is accustomed to see here, I saw nothing whatever to remind me that I was out of Old England. The fine old church, as they call it, which is the very model of an old Methodist chapel of the period of about thirty or forty years ago, was considered a great beauty when erected, and has some very good points now.

Not only in their Conferences, but all throughout Canada, was I very much struck with the intensity of their devotion to the British throne and institutions. One day I went to see a place called Hamilton. I did not know on going in what could be the matter, and I said to my son, "Well, this is a fast-asleep place, at all events." It was not much like a rising colony. All the shops were closed, and no business was going on. I learned afterwards that it was the Queen's birthday, and the Queen's birthday all through Canada is kept as a general holiday. In the afternoon there were the firing of guns and other things, which relieved the monotony of the early part of the day, and which convinced the stranger that their loyalty, so far at least as the outward expression of it is concerned, is very much in advance of what we see in this country.

At the Conference of Montreal it did occur to me to utter a few words concerning the British throne, and respecting our relation to our colonies in general, and Canada in particular. The response was almost overwhelming. Such an expression of devoted loyalty to the British Crown I was unprepared for. There is a considerable party in the East of Canada in favour of annexation; but throughout the length and breadth of Canada generally I was amazed at the depth, fervour, and intensity of their devotion to the British throne, and pride at their connection with Old England; and I say to you, brother Englishmen, let us never forsake them.

I have to support the request of the address that the Rev. Dr. Rice may be appointed as President for the next year.

It is proposed to alter our Conferences in the Dominion of Canada. We have at present two, the Canada Conference and the Conference of the Eastern Provinces. That is now felt to be inconvenient. It is proposed to have four, five, or

six Annual Conferences, and to have a General Conference once in three or four years on the plan of our American brethren. The plan seems quite feasible. It was discussed at length. Mr. Punshon himself is very much in favour of it; and it certainly does seem a judicious plan, and, if carried out, likely to promote the working of the Methodist Church in that great dominion.)

I have to thank you for the patience with which you have listened to a rather too long statement, and to express my gratitude for having been preserved through those journeys, and brought back to what I feel to be, after all, the best country in the world.



THE EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE.

A SERMON

Preached at the Anniversary of the Liverpool Road Wesleyan Chapel, London, on October 19, 1871.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”—HEB. xi. 13.

IT seems a very common thing to take the word “pilgrim” in its religious sense as very nearly identical with the word “hermit;” but the two not only differ, but in some respects very strongly contrast. The hermit is a personage who never appears in the Bible; or if he does appear, it is in some very distant glimpses indeed. He is not found, either in the old or in the new dispensation, as having any part in the appointments of the people of God; but the hermit is one of the favourite institutions of heathenism, and was, in olden times, prevalent over all the great ancient countries. The idea was early adopted in Egypt, and from Egypt it diffused itself over all the West, even to our own country. The hermit is one who has a quarrel with human society, and takes it to be his business to get as far away from mankind as circumstances will permit him. He may effect the separation by locality, by getting into a desert; he may effect it by confining himself within the walls of a convent, by getting up a tree, or living on the top of a pillar, as has sometimes been done. He may confine that separation to costly and particular habits and vows; but still his great idea is, to separate himself from human society and so

cut out that part of human nature that does not lie built up within the four walls of his own person.

Now, this is by no means the character of the pilgrim. The pilgrim is quite another personage. He has no quarrel with human society. He does not purpose to separate himself from mankind. On the contrary, pilgrims have been remarkable in every age and nation for being social, for seeking in their pilgrimage as many companions as they can possibly gather together, and for cheering their pilgrimage with as many comforts as they can carry through the journey, and with as many songs, and as much intercourse, and as much vivacity and pleasure of every kind as they can possibly command. But the pilgrim is one who has a point at which he is aiming, and a purpose for which he aims at it; and no matter what land he has to traverse, however pleasant it may be, it must not tempt him to stay, or however foul it may be, it must not discourage him so that he turn back. He has to go on; if it be a desert, to cross it in spite of its difficulties; if it be a garden, to cross it in spite of its flowers, and still to go on. The definition of the character of a pilgrim cannot be more complete than what is given in the verses immediately following our text, "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." That is a pilgrim—one who has an object in his eye, and is pressing on towards that object. Then, in this verse that I have taken as a text we have, first, the object-point of the pilgrims; secondly, the animating spirit of their pilgrimage; thirdly, its starting point; fourthly, its course; fifthly, its end. The object-point of God's pilgrims: they seek a country; they seek a better country, that is an heavenly. The animating spirit of their pilgrimage: faith. The starting point: they come out. The course: they walk on, travelling over earth to heaven. The end: all die in faith.]

In the description of the OBJECT-POINT of the pilgrimage we have two words used—the one country, the other city. They "declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out,

they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." It is a country, and it is a city. *A country.* That thought throws before us at once the great idea of breadth and vastness. As we are passing to the other world, we are not passing to a confined sphere, but to one where there will be wide places for the powers of every man and of every woman called to unite in the work of that land, wide places for all to exercise their power, and for all to dwell in it. It is a *city*. It is not a lonely place, but a place of society. It is a city: it is not an undefended place, but a place with its walls and bulwarks, and eternal fences. It is a city: it is not a place built by chance and without arrangement, but a place built upon a plan. It is a city that hath a builder and maker; that is, as we should say in our modern language, both an architect and a builder. The word translated "builder" means the architect who builds the structure first within his soul before it is ever built outside. An oration, a sermon, a grand scheme, or a palace, is in the first place produced within the soul of a man, and there it stands, and grows, and shines, perhaps far nobler than it ever does in the outer world. And so that city has its architect, the great God; for, in what He would delight in the midst of His own, in what He Himself would dwell, where His children should be housed, in what streets the princes of God should walk, in what abbey the multitudes of the happy should assemble, and with what defences and adornments the city of the Great King should shine upon the eyes of His own for ever, He formed this first, and then He made it. Both architect and constructor is God; and that city and that country are His country and His city.)

He is not ashamed to be called their God who choose that land for their own. He would be ashamed to be called the God of any that said, "I want nothing to seek; I want no inheritance but what will satisfy the animals of the fields; I want to have enough for my body, and to die, and forget, and

be forgotten." But He is not ashamed to be called the God of those who say, "I seek a city that is out of sight; I am not of this earth, but a stranger here." "*A pilgrim* and a *stranger*." What does that mean? Not a *native*. Not a native of the world; for he did not come from this country originally. A pilgrim; not a *settler*. Such a one would say, "I am here neither a native nor a settler. For the faith of the Christian pilgrim always has one eye backward and one forward. The word "country" never conveys more to the hearts of any people than it does to the hearts of those belonging to our nation. Suppose four men were crossing the water to-day, leaving our own shores, one going to Canada, another to the States, another to Africa, and another to Australia. We might say of each, "He is going to seek a country." Ay, but that is not the word here. The word we have to deal with means that the pilgrim is seeking his fatherland, not merely a country, but his native country. The word in the text contains the meaning that this spirit of mine is not the offspring of a clod, but that though I am found here I am not a native of this world. I spring from the stock that are themselves immortals, going *from* heaven to heaven *through* earth. Such is the appointment of the pilgrims of God, and they seek a country; a country that is itself out of sight; a city that hath foundations; a wide heritage; and a most blessed society.

There is in that heritage one peculiarity: the more heirs to share the estate the greater the possessions for every one of them. Probably you say, "That can't be; if there be an estate to be divided, the more heirs the less for each." But that depends on what the estate is. It is quite true that if a man has a thousand acres to leave, and has ten sons to leave them to, and divides them among them, there is less for each than if he had fewer sons. If he has £1,000, and has to divide it among ten, the same rule will of course hold; but, even upon earth, all our inheritance is not of that kind. What are the acres but clay, and the guineas but as the same? But even here we have brighter, and purer, and nobler

inheritances than these. Suppose that at the darkest hour of this night you were sitting upon a hill, and it was said to you, "Now, presently the light will come, and you will have a glorious inheritance;" and, that just before the sun rose, a mysterious voice whispered to you, "It will be all for yourself. There is not another eye of man, woman, child, beast, or bird but has been deprived of the sun; and all the light that comes forth from the doors of heaven will glow throughout the universe for you alone." Would that increase your inheritance of glory? No, no. Oh! you would long for other eyes as well as your own to look upon it; and each that came up and opened eyes to the light would increase your inheritance of light, and be another object of beauty to delight you. And so will it be with all those who inherit upon the estates of our great Father on high. Every new heir, whencesoever he cometh, will but increase the delight of everyone already there. Then let them come from the east and the west, the north and the south; from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue. Let them come, old and young, rich and poor, likely and unlikely, and tens of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand; and every added one will be but another star in our firmament, another flower in our field, another voice to swell our chorus, another instrument to make music in our ear for ever and for ever.

They seek a city that is out of sight, BY FAITH. "Faith," says the apostle, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This is the defining of faith according to its effect. The effect that faith produces is, to give the soul an evidence of a thing that it does not see, and to make the soul enjoy a subsistence that it hopes for. We know that our perception of anything does not depend upon its existence or upon our own. We may exist, and all the music that floats on the earth may exist; and yet there may be no music for us if the hearing is not there. We may exist, and all the sunbeams may be dancing upon our eyelids; but no light can be for us if the sight is not there. And so, a man

may be existing in the midst of the infinite presence of the Holy One, and yet see, and feel, and hear not. There is no God for him. Blind in the midst of sunlight, he knoweth not his Maker. A soul without faith has no sense of God. The first dim beginning of belief within a man is any sense God's spirit may give to him of superhuman or invisible things, the sense of God, of heaven, of hell, of judgment, of eternity, of the grand solemnity of right and wrong, of man accountable, of man a moral agent, leading him to say, "My actions have not only an outward appearance to human eyes, but have also an everlasting weight; and they will be put in balances and weighed for eternity." Every feeling of this kind is the beginning of the work of faith within a man, and, just in proportion as his eyes are opened, he begins to discern the things that are eternal; and he may believe until he trembles. That is the first effect of this faith, and it soon leads to justification. God reveals things eternal to a man until he cries, "What must I do to be saved?" Then all the struggle of his faith becomes concentrated upon the one great point where salvation begins and ends, the cross of Christ, the fountain that is open in His side for sin and for uncleanness; and there, beholding "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and struggling under the burdens of his own transgression, personal to him and not to be shared with another, he flees for refuge to "the hope set before" him in the Gospel, and clings, and cries, and trusts, and pleads until he is enabled to say, "My Saviour, my God." Then the thing hoped for, the substance of God, the peace of God, takes possession of his heart, and opens up other things hoped for, as the Christian's happy death, glorious resurrection, crown, robes, palms, harps, and the fountains of life, and the friends that never die, and all the vision of the Lord in His beauty. All these things hoped for are made by faith to appear before the eye, and even the city itself,

"The city so holy and clean,
No sorrow can breathe in the air,"

is brought before the view and made real to the man. The worldly man says, "No, not real, not real, not so real as is his earthly home." Try that, try it. Whether of the two would stand the test of action? For that is the only test of what is in a man. Never trust a man's account of his own motives and feelings until you see him brought to the test of action; and never trust your own until they have been brought to that test. How many a man there is to whom God has revealed that city that is out of sight, who, if he must choose between letting his house here be burned to ashes and giving up his hope of that eternal house, would not hesitate one moment? "Then, let the house go, for 'yonder's my house, my portion fair.' I won't give that up." He cannot. "Let no man take my crown." That eternal happiness must be sought and secured, whatever else be lost; and so faith, being continually present to view things spiritual in a living representation, makes them over-master things temporal, so that the man is looking, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

The STARTING-POINT with men now of this pilgrimage is, as in the case of Abraham, *that they go out*. Abraham was dwelling in what was then the fairest and noblest of all lands, where the two grand rivers rush down from the north towards the south, tending eastward as they go, and fill the earth with fertility; whilst the great sun above, taking advantage of these waters, nourishes all the loveliest fruits and flowers and trees that earth and heaven together can produce in this world of ours. There, where man's dwellings had arisen, and cities and villages, and the proud towers of Babylon, and many a monument the foundations of which we are finding out in our own day had sprung up, there was the place where Abraham dwelt. And the word came that he must go out. Go whither? Not eastward towards the rising sun, to new and lovelier countries if they could be found out; but he must turn westward towards the setting sun, must turn his back

upon the beautiful fields of Mesopotamia, must face that frightful Syrian desert. Wild and forbidding it is, but he has to do it. He goes out and faces the desert; and if you start upon a pilgrimage to God, it will be by going out. Every man has his own pleasant place, his own banks of the Euphrates, his own Ur of the Chaldees, his own sweet fields of possession or of imagination. They may be very limited; but still, while a man is a sinner without God, there are sweet charms continually around him inviting him to continue in his sin. Come out, come out!—out of the world, out of your own sins, out of all that you value that leads you away from Christ, out of the paths that go downward and not upward; out of the ways that are broad, not narrow; out of the habits that the crowd are practising, and not God's people; come out, out to-night! Don't say, "I think I am; I hope I shall; I am thinking of it." *Do* it! Leave your sins and sinful ways, and turn your face to the Cross, to the Saviour; and if it be a desert, and if you have to encounter all kinds of trial, well, the pilgrim must take desert or meadow as he goes. He is going to seek a country, and must not be deterred by little things or invited to delay by any, whether little or great.

As to THE COURSE of the pilgrimage, we see by the text that the individuals alluded to persevered. They declared that they sought a country, and Paul says, "If they had desired to return to the country from whence they had come out, they might have found opportunity." After Abraham had toiled through that Syrian desert, the green hills of Palestine opened; and as he passed from pasture plain to pasture plain he did not sit down and say, "I am to be a settler here." The promise said: "This land shall be thine; but thine must take possession. Thy children shall hundreds of years hence possess it, but not thou." He saw those goodly stones that were afterwards to be the foundations of very grand structures, but he never quarried them; he saw those bright metals that were afterwards to shine in the temples and

palaces of his descendants, but never worked them ; he saw those goodly cedars, but never had them polished. The land prospered with him, and he with it ; but he built nothing that would seem to say, "I am a settler, I am going to find rest." He dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the promise, the present always pointing to the future, and meaning, "We are strangers ; we are pilgrims ; our country is an heavenly country. As to earthly possessions, our children shall build, our children shall have firm roofs and grand walls ; but, as for us, the little curtain of goat's hair clogged enough to shut out the sun, and the slender sticks that the servant men can pitch or lift in a minute or two, that must be all."

Dwelling in tents without foundation, they constantly said, "We are seeking a city that hath foundations." Then came the cold breath of famine upon the plains of Palestine, and drove them southwards ; and again the patriarch has to face another desert drearier and more waste even than the last ; and he and the servants and the cattle make their lonely way across it, until once more there burst upon his eyes palm-trees, and rice-fields, and beautiful gardens, and houses, and villages, and cities, and pyramids, and the great river Nile with its thronged multitudes of busy and well-clad men. Has he not found a country at last ? Won't he settle here ? Will not he have a pyramid perhaps for himself, or at least one of the palace-tombs ? No. On the Nile, as on the Euphrates or on the Jordan, the word is, "Pilgrim, on, on !" Enjoying the mercies of Palestine, enjoying the mercies of Egypt, enjoying the other mercies of God's good hand wherever he goes, but still on, on to the land of eternal rest. There is no rest for him here. So was the course continued, and so must yours be. On, always on ! Sometimes we say, "I am still in the way to Zion with my face thitherward." Good to be in the way, good to have the face in the right direction ; but remember, a man may be looking in the right way and not be going forward. You must not judge of your Christian progress simply by the fact that you are desiring to arrive at last in heaven, and desiring to tread the path below. There are way-marks, and you must observe them. Are you overtaking anything ; are you passing anything ; are you leaving anything behind ? Are there those old habits and principles that once it seemed impossible for you to overcome, and as though they would continually have the mastery when you came to a

trying moment, and do you now find that by the conquering power of Christ within, you are rising nearer and nearer to an equal struggle, and that sometimes you are able to shout, "Victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb?" Are there those points of patience, faithfulness, prayerfulness, and watchfulness; those points of relish for spiritual things, or delight in the Word of God; those points of Christian feeling and experience that formerly you seemed as if you never could keep abreast with; and now do you begin to keep up with them? And your weaknesses that so often attacked you are, thank God! far behind, and you say, "Leaving the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are before, I press toward the mark?" Is that your course? If so, Go on, go on! and the end will come, the happy end.)

"These all DIED IN FAITH." We might remark in this a small but a very important change in the language Paul employs. Up to this point he is continually saying that such, and such, and such a thing they did by faith. He does not say that they died *by* faith; he says. "They died *in* faith." They died, as your margins render it very exactly, "according to faith." They had the faith, and they lived in it; they had the faith, and with it they went down the hill; they had the faith, and with it they set their foot into the tide of the dark river; and with that faith they crossed. "They died in faith, not having received the promises." You will observe, of course, that here the word "promise" means the things promised. They had received the promise in the sense that the promise was made to them; but had never received the promise in the sense of having entered upon a fulfilment of it. That was not the Lord's design. They were to be a type to us: they were to behold an inheritance afar off, to live for it, and to shape their course accordingly, yet never to become actual possessors, not having received the promise to that effect. Not one city of all Palestine, not one village, not one mountain-side, not one valley were they owners of. They had not received the promises, but they had "seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." You see how he brings in the idea of faith again in the words "seeing them afar off," making faith the eyesight of the soul. Eyesight! You think it is only for this world; but such is not the case. You are not made for one world; and you are not made for one world even as to your bodies. They are not

made for one world. That world which we call the sun, and which is millions and millions of miles away from this, if that did not shine upon you, you in this world would be all dark ; but as the eye connects the body with that far-off world, that land of light, so also faith connects the soul with the things that are afar off. It sees them, sees the glory, sees the golden gate, sees the great archangel, sees the altar and the incense and the beauty and the joy, and longs to be there.)

"They saw them afar off and embraced them," says our translator, which rather embarrasses the reader. Our word "embrace" of course means "taking in the arms." Now, faith only saw it afar off ; how could they, then, clasp it in their arms ? The writer does not say, "took it in their arms." He used another word. He said, "They saw them afar off and saluted them ;" or, as we should say, "hailed," just as a man who has been far away in Australia and is returning in a ship bound for the Thames ; but yonder on the coast of Devonshire he sees a black something that looks a little firmer than the clouds. He does not see a house ; he does not see a field ; he does not see a tree ; much less does he see a man or woman ; but he exclaims, "There it is, the old place, the place where I was born, my native land, my native home !" And seeing it he hails it, hails it so far off. And so is it with the pilgrim to the better country. Many of you, when God has shed upon your soul His illuminating power of faith, have seen that country, and sung—

"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye
Thy golden gates appear !"

So you hail that better country ; and some, perhaps, may not be far from entering in. We know not how soon we may be called. It may be at evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning ; but the question is not, Shall we soon be taken away, but, Are we ready to go ? It is not, *When* shall we go, but, *Where* shall we go ? It is not, Shall I have a long lease of my present dwelling in this frail tabernacle of the flesh, but it is, Can I read my title clear to mansions in the sky ? Have I a title or have I not ? Am I in Christ or am I not ? Has the Spirit of God changed my heart, or has He not ? Has the blood of the Lamb washed away my sins, or has it not ? Is there a sin that is unforgiven resting upon my soul ? Can

I read my title clear? "Yes," say some; "yes," say many;
and some new-found believers in Christ say,

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

And so you may, for God will soon wipe away all tears from them for ever and ever. But, oh! there are some that are not in the way to the city, much less within the gates. I shall never forget a certain afternoon when, after I had been at Bethlehem in the forenoon, towards sunset Jerusalem came into sight with the Turkish flag waving over the old battlements. We rode on in solemn silence, weighed down with thoughts that may be better imagined than described; so that something the Arabs said attracted no attention, until at last one of them came to me and said what in our language means, "The sun is going." Most people know that in that country, as soon as the sun goes down, the gates of all the cities are closed, and if you are outside, you are out for the night, and the robbers are abroad, and there is none to deliver. We hurried on. It was a race if we could get in before the sun was down; and, as we were pressing on, just coming up towards the Jaffa gate, we saw in the distance evidently one of our own countrymen galloping as hard as ever spurs could make horse gallop. He was in the same danger, and urging for the same point; and, just before we entered the gate he passed us; and all were in before the sun went down. You must get inside the gate before sundown. Remember that! With some men the sun goes down at mid-day. The "sun is going" now. When it will go down we know not. It may be suddenly, and, if you are not inside the city, the keepers of the gate will say, in your faces, "The door is shut;" and you will be outside, and the great robber will seize upon the prey, and there will be none to deliver. Enter, oh! enter within the gate into the city before the sun is down; and may God keep you in His grace, and crown you at last with His glory. Amen and amen.]

BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY.

A SERMON

*Preached at Loughborough Park Chapel, Cold Harbour Lane,
Brixton, on Sunday, October 22, 1871.*

BY THE REV. LUKE H. WISEMAN, M.A.

“But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped.”—PSALM lxxiii. 2.

HOW diversified is the course of Christian experience! How often it happens that the Christian man who is supposed by his neighbours to be pursuing the even tenor of his way without any great difficulties, is all the while conscious himself of a bitter and fearful conflict going on in his own breast! There are sorrows, my brethren, as well as joys. There are conflicts as well as victories, which are all known to the soul itself and to the great Searcher of hearts. Backsliding is of two kinds, secret and open. The open backsliding everyone can understand. I need not dwell upon that; but in addition to open violation of God's commandments and public departure from the path of morality and religion, there is a kind of backsliding against which we all need to be much and continually upon our guard. We have need to guard against the “evil heart of unbelief” that departeth from the living God. There is need to guard against secret error, secret evil thoughts, secret backslidings, especially in Christian countries like this, where conventionalism passes for so much. There is even perhaps a greater danger with many of secret backsliding than there is of any flagrant and notorious violation of the moral law.

The case before us is very interesting. This is a Psalm of Asaph. The writer flourished either in the time of David, or else in the time of the captivity of Babylon. The date can hardly be settled. The general structure of the Psalm leads me to suppose the author was the later Asaph and not the earlier one; but this is not a matter which at all affects the view of the subject which I propose to take this evening. Whether he was the earlier or the later prophet of the name is not a question which has the slightest bearing upon the present view of the case here presented. It is quite enough for us that this Asaph was a holy man, and not only a holy man, but a man of unusual holiness. He was a man inspired by God. He was a man who occupied a prominent position in the Church of God, and, as is evident from the Psalms, was accustomed to exercise a careful scrutiny over himself, watching his thoughts as well as his words; and the Psalm before us gives a most instructive account of a temptation into which this pious and devoted servant of God nearly fell. He did get into a great amount of trouble. He was brought into such distress that it was almost more than he could bear; and he felt afterwards that he had sinned against God, and had made sad up-hill work of repentance; but still, after all, the fall was not complete. The keen thing in our text is that word *almost*. A remarkable word is that. "My feet were almost gone." The word, you see, has two sides, like a coin of the realm. You turn it first on this side and then on that, and you see different inscriptions. Look at it on this side, and see the peril and danger: "*almost gone*." But turn it over and look at the obverse side, and there you see the escape and recovery: "*almost gone*." Thank God! not quite; for the Lord is He that restoreth souls, as David said in that beautiful pastoral: "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Now, dear brethren, the subject before us to-night is two-fold. The first point is the soul's downward progress in the

way of backsliding; and the second is the soul's upward progress in the way of restoration and recovery.

First, then, you have THE DOWNWARD CAREER. "My feet were almost gone: my steps had well-nigh slipped." The occasion of this temptation is set before us at very considerable length in the former part of the Psalm. Substantially the temper, the evil temper with which this man of God had to contend was envy—in which he confesses himself to have indulged to a very considerable extent. And if we study the progress, as it is stated here, of this one temptation of envy, and the way in which it gained the mastery over the man, we shall have obtained some light not only with regard to this particular snare, but also with regard to the process of temptation in general; and in the verse which follows the text Asaph sums up the whole matter. He tells it us in a single phrase: "I was envious." That tells the whole tale. Some will say, "Is that all? Is that all? Is there no case of theft, or adultery, or murder, or lying? Is there merely an inward feeling?" That is all, my brethren. There was nothing more than that, nothing that the world could lay hold of, nothing which gave any occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully of the Church of God. But still there was a state of heart which, if it had been allowed to go a little further than it ~~did~~ go, would have led to very serious outward consequences. "I was envious," he says. If we imagine that this Asaph was in Babylon, we can easily account for the temptation, from the circumstances which he saw around him. His heart was grieved and he fell into bitterness of spirit, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. Now, that fits very precisely with the circumstances of the captive in Babylon; but whether he was there or not, I will not undertake to say. I will only say that the hypothesis fits the circumstances of the Psalm exceedingly well. You may conceive then of this man, if you please, as looking upon himself as a servant of the true and living God. "I profess," he says, "the true religion, I am a believer in the true God;

and these people around me are idolaters; they are blasphemers; they are given up to licentiousness; they practise without a blush vices which are not to be named; they blaspheme the name of God; and yet they are in power; they are in authority; while our nation is captive, and I myself am in a state of wretchedness and degradation. How is all this? If God were true, would it be thus? If the prophecies of God had not failed, should we have been in this poor pitiful state? I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

The next point is, that the soul in the earlier stages of the backsliding state is liable to take the most distorted and incorrect views of things. So it was with Asaph under the progress of this temptation of envy. He tells us substantially the feelings which exercised his mind, and the view of things which he took while he was under the progress of this temptation. To him, having come into this envious, discontented, complaining state—all that belonged to the wicked appeared to put on an easier view; while all that belonged to the people of God seemed clothed in gloom and in mourning. He says: "There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men." Why, Asaph, surely if you were to get into a better state you would know better than that. If there is sometimes apparently a gleam of sunshine, there are also dark and terrible storms for the wicked. "My steps had well-nigh slipped." He had got into a jaundiced way, and was taking an erroneous view of things. "They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." Then comes a

deplorably bitter contrast in the way in which he viewed things in his temptation: "Therefore His people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Such are the distorted and, in many respects, false and incorrect views which he confesses to have taken of things while under the influence of that temptation. Observe that the falsehood is not total; and, my friends, total falsehood has very little influence over any sensible man. Falsehood, in order to get any influence over practical, sensible people, must be mixed up with a little truth. And so it is in regard to this man. He had got hold of a portion of what was correct, namely, the pride and the insolence and the haughtiness of those blaspheming people who surrounded him. His error was in supposing that his specimens were fair specimens; and, further, he was wrong in supposing they had no troubles and no plagues as other men; because if he had reflected a little, he must have known that even those men upon whom he had fixed his eye were not exempt from the sufferings, nay, the anguish of a guilty conscience. He takes an imperfect and one-sided view of things; and this is the first stage of the temptation.

Now, the next stage in a soul's erring progress is this, that the man of God begins to think his religion of very little value. You have this in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, He says, "Verily," and this word seems to intimate that he was not expressing a mere passing frame of mind, but that he had come to what he considered a very deliberate conclusion upon the matter, which rendered the temptation all the more dangerous. "Verily," he says, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." O thou man of God, thou art getting wrong now. It is very plain that thy feet are almost gone, when thou canst say that

thy religion, (all thy attempts at holiness and purity of heart and all thy endeavours to please God,) has been fruitless, unprofitable, a sham, and a delusion. Ah, thou man of God, how sad is the influence of temptation upon the mind! And how all of us need to guard against the subtle snares of that deceiver who in various ways tries so to mix a little truth with a great deal of falsehood, as to lead to the utter disorganisation of our piety, if not to the final ruin of our souls!

Then see again what a spirit of discontent there is in him. See how he begins to accuse his Maker. "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Is that the temper for a man of God? Is that a right thing for a holy prophet to say? See how the best and the wisest of men, if they don't watch, may sometimes get into a state in which even a little child may reprove them, and see the folly of their ways! "Plagued all the day and chastened every morning." Why, hast thou not some mercies to be thankful for? Is there no gleam of light in this darkness of thine? Has God been to thee altogether a hard master? Think, thou man of God. Think! But it's of no use to tell him to think now. "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped."

Look again, one step in the downward progress is, that the affections become alienated from God's people. The affections, I say, of the heart become alienated from God's people. A spirit of estrangement takes the place of brotherly love. You have that in verse 15: "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children." After having falsely accused his Maker, he now falsely accuses his brethren. The proposition seems to have suggested itself to his mind, or perhaps it was suggested to him by some friend, that he should open his heart and disclose his feelings to some that were of sufficient experience and judgment in the things of God to guide him, and to help him out of this bog in which he had got stuck. "But no," he says. "I shall not seek their sympathy; for what do they care

for me? They will only wish me further off if I ask for sympathy. There is no love in the Church, no religion about anywhere; nobody cares for the welfare of anyone; and therefore I will keep my sorrows to myself. 'If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of Thy children.'"

And here, dear brethren, we have reached the bottom of the subject; and it is a mercy that we have; for if he had gone a little further, it would have been a deplorable case indeed. As it is, you see there is quite enough to justify the strong expression in the text, "my feet had well-nigh slipped."

Let us now notice THE PROGRESS OF RESTORATION, which is detailed in the Psalm with an admirable exactness. The process of restoration, dear friends, usually begins in a consciousness of misery. So was it with Asaph. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." He could'n't bear it. He was like the prodigal son, who having run a course of riot, and wasted his substance, and been reduced to the extremity of penury and wretchedness, then says, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

And it is a blessed thing when there is that sense of misery. Perhaps some of us are a little too premature in trying to offer words of comfort and condolence. It may be so in some cases. It may be well that the soul should remain for a while in a state of wretchedness, well-nigh bordering upon despair, that it may learn by bitter experience (which, perhaps, is the most effectual of all teachers) what an evil thing it is to depart from the ways of the Lord. How long this holy man remained in the state referred to we have no means of judging; but, as to the state, observe that it is related in words that will not admit of any doubt. "It was too painful for me," he says—"more than I could bear." Now, do you not see that there is hope in that very misery? Why was he miserable? Why, because there was something in him better that was conflicting with the evil that was just now in his

heart. The very fact of a conflict supposes two opposing forces. If there is no opposing force there is no conflict ; and the most desperate state of heart in which a human being can be found, is that in which he is perfectly comfortable and perfectly happy in sin. There is nothing so awful as to see a transgressor perfectly happy in his sin, and perfectly at rest and comfortable in a state of wickedness and unbelief. If there are unrest and anxiety in however small a degree, there is a case for hope ; because there is somewhere in the heart a force contrary to the prevailing force of evil, and, therefore, the distress is a token for good. And so it is in regard to Asaph : the extremity of his wretchedness afforded grounds for hope. The fact that his experience was too painful for him showed that he was not going to be given over a prey to deception. And when there is this spirit of unrest, anxiety, disquietude of soul, it is, so far as it goes, a token for good.

In the next place, observe that the soul's restoration is usually effected through the means of grace. I say *usually* it is so, because the Lord's dealings are exceedingly various and manifold ; but in the case before us the restoration was effected through the ordinary means of grace. Let us hear them. In verses 16 and 17 he says : "It was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God." We learn from this that his backsliding had not reached the point of open secession from the house of God. He had all this bitterness in his heart ; but he still kept up the form of public worship. He went into the house of God ; and a blessed thing it is that he did ; and it has been a blessed thing for thousands and tens of thousands since his day that they have done the same. He went into the house of God. My friends, if darkness should overtake you ; if temptation should lay hold of you, and you fall a victim to some great sin, I beseech you, forsake not then the house of God. This is the way in which you may hope to be restored. This man, if he had given up the outward means of grace, would have lost the very channel

through which light and salvation were vouchsafed ; and here see the advantage of public worship. I mention this incidentally, as on this occasion we celebrate the anniversary of a house of prayer. One of the great advantages of public worship consists in its preventive tendency. How much evil it prevents, will only be disclosed at the last day. Another advantage consists in its healing and restorative tendency. Many people go to the house of prayer who have done wrong, and nobody knows it. They do not neglect the outward form of worship, although they have fallen into a very miserable state. So far, there is cause for thankfulness with ground for hope ; and then some day the word of the Lord comes home to them. A hymn, perhaps, or something in a prayer, or something in a sermon, is blessed by the Lord to the opening of the sinner's eyes, so that he is able to look unto Jesus once more. How much of this healing of a restorative kind takes place, will only be disclosed on the great day of accounts.

So it was then with Asaph. He went into the sanctuary of God. What did he hear there ? He tells us (verse 17) : "I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end"—*i.e.*, the end of the wicked. That appears to have been the subject which was brought prominently to his attention ; and in the next two or three verses he gives the thoughts and meditations which his mind was led to form in connection with that service. "How are they brought into desolation as in a moment ! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." All that was brought before him in the sanctuary of God. I am not going to expound these words to-night. They are a grand subject for a discourse, or for two or three ; but I merely call your attention to them. How suitable the theme was to the state of mind of the poor man when he went into the house of God ! He was fretting himself about the prosperity of the wicked, and envious of everybody and everything. In his wretchedness of heart he still kept up the outward form, and

attended the house of prayer, and heard something that was just suited to his state of mind, and which led to those meditations which are summarised in these few verses.

And then, again, you will clearly see, I am sure, without the taking of much time to point it out, another of the advantages connected with public worship, especially when the preacher and the people are living in a state of communion with the Lord. This advantage is, that the words spoken fit some one in the congregation so exactly, that even if he had been with his pastor and had disclosed everything, nothing more suitable could have been said. It is of the Lord ; and in this way the Holy Spirit of God doubtless often fits light and grace and strength in a manner which leads a devout and believing soul to give praise and glory to His name. So it was with Asaph. He met with something exactly suited to his case.

Then we pass on. The soul's restoration is marked by shame and repentance. "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee." Ah! thou man of God, thou art getting right now! Now there is hope for thee. Now thou art not far from the kingdom of God. Thou art ashamed of thyself. Thou dost repent as in dust and ashes. Thou dost see thyself to be foolish, whereas a little while ago thou thoughtest thyself wise. Now thou art brought into the path of humility,—a blessed path as it leads to a higher and more satisfied state. "Foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee." Where repentance is, we may believe that joy is not far distant.

Again, in the soul's upward progress of repentance and restoration, the truth begins to dawn on the mind. Even in the worst of Asaph's error the light had not totally forsaken him. He is not astonished, now when he has nearly recovered, at the Lord's goodness in keeping him from utterly falling. "My God! How is it I didn't go further? How is it I did not go to complete Atheism? How is it that the enemy was not

permitted to have a final advantage over me just at the point where he seemed to have gained the victory? I have been continually, he says, with thee; thou didst not suffer me utterly to fall; thou hast holden me by my right hand. But for Thy restraining mercy, O my God, I should have gone further!" And "almost gone" would have had to be exchanged for "utterly gone" and "finally lost."

And now, dear friends, we have arrived upon high ground again. The man is now restored. He says in verse 24 (and it is a very common text, and a very beautiful one), "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." As if he should say, "Lord, I have had enough of guiding myself. Lord, I took my case into my own hands, and I was led by my own reasonings; and bitter indeed has been the result. O Lord, by Thy grace, there shall be no more of this. Thou shalt guide me henceforth. I will not trust my own wisdom any more. I will follow implicitly the teachings of Thy blessed Word, and the happy result will be that afterwards I shall be received into glory." And then the whole closes with the most joyful expressions of confidence, and love, and hope. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." The Lord grant that all that have fallen may be restored! At the same time, take, as a closing lesson, the advisability of not falling; and then entrance shall be given to us into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.



SPIRITUAL WEAKNESS.

ANOTHER cause of spiritual weakness is a secret love of sin. The Israelites found in the habits of the men of Canaan much that was congenial to their own corrupt inclinations. In our own day there are degraded Englishmen who have settled among the savages of New Hebrides or Fiji, on purpose to be free from all moral restraint, and who outdo the worst of the heathen in every kind of abomination. In religious families there are sons and daughters who, although outwardly restrained by the circumstances of their position, cherish a bitter hatred of religion, and a secret love for a dissipated life. And even in the hearts of the faithful what strange occasional lingerings towards evil! What treacherous trifling with things forbidden! What hovering about the devil's ground! What secret inclinations to taste the poisoned cup! What strange revival, at times, of the power of old habits which we had imagined subdued for ever! What infatuated dancing on the brink of hell, like the moth fluttering round the candle to its destruction! Who can explain the depth of that hidden treason? Who can disclose the inner sources of that secret alienation from the adorable God, that lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, which so many of the faithful mourn? Had Israel hated the sins of Canaan, they would not have failed to subdue the men of Canaan; nor would they have entered into league with their armies if they had not been secretly inclined to their ways. "Never," says Calvin, "does the love of piety sufficiently flourish in our hearts unless it begets in us a hatred of sin." To the same effect writes the Psalmist: "Do not I hate them, O God, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with them that rise up against Thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies." No wonder we languish in spiritual weakness, when the world or the flesh has a secret share in our affections.—From "*Men of Faith; or, Sketches from the Book of Judges*," by Rev. L. H. Wiseman.

DECLARATION

The first of these is the fact that the
 of the world is a very different thing
 from the world of the past. The world
 of the past was a world of peace and
 harmony, but the world of the present
 is a world of war and conflict. The
 world of the past was a world of
 simplicity, but the world of the present
 is a world of complexity. The world
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REV. SAMUEL COLEY.

THE GREAT WORK OF LIFE.

A SERMON TO THE YOUNG,

Preached in the Wesleyan Chapel, Blackheath,

October, 1871.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL COLEY.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”—
ECCLESIASTES ix. 10.

VERY many persons sleep away their lives. It is a great shame to do that when there are so many blessed things to do. It is said that a certain nobleman through sheer *ennui* went to commit suicide, but as he was on his way to the place where he intended to destroy himself, he saw a weeping child, whose tears, whose lamentations won his attention, and on inquiry he found that she came from a home of sorrow. He went with the child, and removed the sorrow that he found there by his kind words and by his gifts; and as he came away he said, “What a fool am I to think of rushing immediately out of a world where so much good can be done!” It was the hour of a new life to him, the beginning of doing good things. Some persons have slandered duty by saying that it leads to an apathetic life and to misery; but this is not true. And let it never be justly said of any of you. Live while you live. Be thoroughly in earnest about what you have to do. It is a truth that it is proper to believe, young people, about the common things of life, that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Young people, lay that lesson to heart, and it will keep you out of a world of

mischievous, because it will be a fair test to you of what is worth doing. There are many trivial and foolish things that you will see others do ; but remember that, while what is worth doing at all is worth doing well, what is not worth doing well is not worth doing at all. You cannot do everything. Life must be a series of choices. Therefore, I say, throw away the trivial things, and give yourself to the doing of noble things.

There is a beautiful old Papistic legend which illustrates an important truth, but which you must not suppose to be true. It is said that one day a monk was sitting in his cell, when suddenly he became conscious of a bright angel sitting beside him ; and sweet was the colloquy which ensued between them. But just as the monk was enjoying it immensely, the convent bell began to sway to and fro. What an annoying thing that was ! The bell was calling him to go to the door, where it was his duty to deal out bread to the poor. He wavered in his mind whether he should go or not ; but discipline ruled him, and up he rose at the swing of the bell, and away he went and gave to the poor what he had to bestow. Then, with a somewhat sad heart, after some time had passed, having discharged his duty, he retired to his cell, expecting to find that the angel had gone ; but to his surprise he found the angel still there, who said to him, "If you hadn't obeyed the call of duty and left me, I should have left you ; but because you have obeyed the call of duty I am here." I don't suppose, as I said before, that the tale is true ; but it is very instructive, for all that. It has a beautiful lesson. When the bell of duty swings, obey it. Your Master didn't stay on the mountain top when He took with Him His disciples. There are duties to thy father and to thy mother. There are duties belonging to the first table : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." There are duties belonging to the second table : "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Young men ! put the nonsense away from you, that Christianity unfits a man for his daily duty. It hallows and elevates it. Suppose there is in a train a young scapegrace running

away from home, who hardly knows whither he is going. Is not that scapegrace likely to be less careful and courteous by the way than a youth who loves his home? The lad who is going home to his mother after twelve months in his first situation, how does he feel? There are not five minutes of the way when his heart does not leap as he thinks of his mother and his sisters, and he is longing for the kiss of welcome; but for all that, that lad can look after his luggage; for all that, that lad can pay the courtesies that are due to a fellow-traveller; and I warrant him, if he loves his mother and sisters, he is likely to do this far more than the young scapegrace I have described. No! one who is going to heaven, and oft thinks of heaven, may yet, for all that, attend to every duty of the way; may yet, for all that, and *because of that*, do all things right. I do not at all plead religion as an excuse for idleness. If a professedly Christian man gave me lofty looks instead of good hard honest work, I should not say much to him. He would not have learned the alphabet of what should constitute true religious life. When you have learned that Christianity and the due performance of all duties are not incompatible, you have learned a good deal; and you have also learned to "offer all your offerings through the ever blessed name" of Christ. You can work for God in daily things, and the Lord will bless you in the midst of them. I quite agree with what was said by good old John Newton, that "if a man were but a shoeblack, he should try to be the best in the village." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." It is true about common things; and no man has a right to plead spirituality in excuse of laziness. Let him be diligent in business, and there is a way of being fervent in spirit, all the time serving the Lord.

I dare say, however, in regard to common things, some of you don't want the spur so much as the check-rein. Some of you young people have fairly got into the stream of life; and I know I need not say anything to you to urge you in these matters; but perhaps even to such it may not be out of place

to ask to lay to heart in regard to common things this good old maxim, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." But, of course, if it is true of inferior work, it is still more precious true of that which is the work of your life. We are here in this world for what? For work. Many are in this world like the forgetful child sent on an errand, who has looked into so many shops, that he has clearly forgotten what he was sent for. There are millions of people in our world, but what brings them here? Wherefore they come, whither they go, they do not in the least know. They have no thought about the way, they have no thought of what life means. Now, that is a very foolish state to be in. Sit down and ask yourselves, Where am I tending to, where am I going? You will not be here much longer. "Where am I going? What will come of it all?" Night comes on with some of you: where do you lodge? The darkness gathers: have you a shelter? Young people, have you begun to ask, Which way am I tending?

Now, there is a great deal of nonsense talked in this age about earnestness. One of the chief maxims of great men has come to be, "Be in earnest;" and this seems to be looked upon as the first thing. Now, dear friends, this is not the first thing. Suppose somebody asked you for directions? Would the first thing you would say be, Run as fast as you can? Oh, dear, no! The first thing is, Get your face in the right direction. Get right first, and run next. If you don't get right first, the faster you go, the further away you go. Being right is first. Get the right thing to do; and when you have got it, be as much in earnest as you can. You cannot then be too earnest; but *get right first*.

There was a young man who once went to the city of Rome. He was an intense student. He had studied by the midnight lamp until his face was pale and his eyes were dim, and as he passed along the streets of Rome, he met one who asked him wherefore he had come. The young man replied: "I have come that I may improve and have opportunities for

reading." "And when you have done that, what then?" The youth's eye brightened with the instinctive ardour of youth, as he said, "Who can tell? I may become a bishop." "And when you have become a bishop, what then?" It seemed almost a vain thing, but still elasticity and youthful hope were there; and he said, "I may become a cardinal." "And when you become a cardinal, what then?" "It seems almost madness," was the reply, "but who can tell? I may become Pope." "And when you have become Pope, what then?" Poor lad! he had got to the end, and he said, "Well, I suppose I must die." "Ah!" said the wise old man, "first get ready for that which must be, and afterwards for that which may be. You may be a bishop; you must die. You may be a cardinal; you must die. You may be Pope; but you must die. First make ready for that which *must be*." That was wise advice. Young people, get first your peace with God; get right for eternity; and then all the greatness that God will let you have I am sure I want you to have; but till you have got that matter settled, it is all a mistake to be over-earnest about the things of this world. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God." Some people say, "I will get this settled and that settled, and then attend to that." No, no. "This first," says Christ. You have no firm foundation till then.

When that clever but demon-like man Cæsar Borgia was dying, having swallowed poison he meant for somebody else, he said, "I am prepared for all but one thing, and that is what I was quite sure of—death." You must settle this one thing, peace with God. There is no foundation unless you have done this.

Many years ago, so severe was the winter that yonder Thames was frozen over, and a fair was held upon the ice. Numbers of persons went every day, and built their booths upon it; and to them thousands of persons resorted, and made purchases. Indeed, I have seen little things marked as bought at the Fair on the Thames. What would you have

thought of some man who, seeing the crowd walking about on the ice, and that business was brisk and profitable, should have said, "I will dwell here," and forthwith begun to prepare for building? "What! build here," you say, "build here! Man, don't you know that in a very little time the ice will have all gone?" He answers, "Don't tell me that. See how firm it is now, and how many thousands of people are walking about." So he piles brick on brick; but by-and-by the light begins to appear through the fog, and the sun begins to shine, and the ice begins to thaw, and in a very little while the structure is immersed in the water. "Oh!" you say, "he has built without a foundation. He has built on the ice. It could not last." Friend, if you are building all your hopes of success on this life—but I keep from calling you an ugly name. It is worse than the folly of that man. You are building on the ice, and in a very little while all you have reared will perish. It is of no use to tell me, "I have been filling my mind, I have been seeking to cultivate my intellect." Suppose you put a stock of precious stones and gold into a shop that has insecure fastenings, and I call upon you and say, "Look after your shop-fastenings first, and then after what you put into it." Why, if you don't take my advice, the more you put in the more you will lose.

Young people, don't understand me as talking against cultivating your minds. Nobody wants you to be more cultured than I do; but do first see that you have got a good shop; do see that it won't all be lost that you put in; do see that the fastenings render your property secure. If it is a duty to do earnestly common work, surely it is also a duty so to do work of such vast importance as that which concerns eternity.

Can I tell you in a few words precisely what you are to do? This is it. First, you must come to Christ. In this matter of salvation, nobody else can help you. Christ says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Don't think that it can be done by deputy: you will never be saved without doing it

yourself. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Come unto Me." There was never a man saved yet who did not come to Christ himself. People can do a great many things for you, but nobody else can save you but Jesus. Then the first thing is to come to Jesus; and the second is to receive Jesus. He is God's great gift to men. You have only to accept Him. "He was wounded for *my* transgressions," you have only to say. "I accept that sacrifice. He was bruised for *my* iniquities: I accept that. Why should I be bruised? The chastisement of *my* peace was upon Him: I accept that. He is God's great gift to *me*. He is the sin-bearer for *me*. He is the atonement for *me*. The Lord hath laid on Him *my* iniquity. I believe that." The Apostle Paul said, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He didn't say it about Peter, although he well knew that Jesus loved Peter, but he spoke of himself individually; just as though he had said, "The sun shines for me as much as if I walked alone, a solitary traveller; but I do not say that it does not shine for them." So you can say, "I come, O Jesus, to Thee. Thou art my Jesus. The Father gave Thee for me. I come to Thee. I accept Thee."

Oh! young people, avow your love. I want you to be honourable. I want you to come out on the Lord's-day, and get under His banner. You are the Lord's; and don't be ashamed of saying so. He says, "I have taken thee out of the world." Very well, then, come out, and take upon you the badge of His service. Would Her Majesty like a soldier who would not wear her livery? Don't be afraid of being connected with the Church. Come out on the Lord's-day and say, "Lord, since I love Thee, I avow Thee. I will put Thy mark upon me; and I don't want to conceal the fact and if I get the pointing finger or the sneering word, I will bear it for Thee." And when you have avowed Christ, what else? Follow Christ. Let Jesus be your pattern—first your Saviour, then your pattern. Sometimes this is reversed; but if you first accept Him, then you will be easily like Him.

These are the things you must do :—Come to Christ, accept Christ, avow Christ, follow Christ.

I have tried to show you as simply as I can what the work is that you have to do; and next I come to the spirit in which you have to do it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." This is true of common work; it is true also of the work of the Church. This should be done with thy might. Young people, bear with me thus far. There are many of you that have not got hold of the true idea of what it is that will make you important and valuable members of society. It is not being very clever, but being very diligent and very determined. As far as my observation has gone, I have not found that the cleverest people have done the most in the world, but the most diligent and determined people. You know what a Spartan mother said to her son. She gave him his father's sword to go to the battle. He said, "Mother, it is a short sword." "Put a step to it, my boy," was the reply. Come a step nearer. If your gifts are not great, put a little more work to them. Be more determined. It is not the man who has the largest gift, but the man who has the strongest will and the invincible determination—the man who will do with his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do, who will accomplish the most. Some people are always dreaming of doing something. They have a floating notion before them, but they do nothing. I don't want you to be either a dreamer or a chatterer. I want you to be a doer. What thy hand findeth to do, whether little or great, do it. Many people fritter life away because they won't condescend to do little things. They say, "I will save up my powers till there is a big chance;" which big chance never comes to persons like them; for they forget that the doing of little things better fits them for the successful undertaking of great things.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Don't go wandering off in search of all sorts of work, but do that which lies near your hand. Do you want to work for God? Do the work that there is to do in your neighbour-

hood. I don't want you to get into any tremendous fever about people that are thousands of miles away, and forget the poor and the ignorant lying near your gates. Do that work that lies near to your hand. Don't say, "It is not big enough." Do it, and when you have done the good thing that lies near you, you will be all the stronger to do the bigger when it comes. The men who, as I said, wait for big chances, never get them. They are not fit for them when they come. The great thing that has made the men of mark has been determination to give all to God. It is amazing how much one man can do when he does all for God. One of our chancellors, who did a wonderful amount of work in a little time, was asked how he managed it. "Because," was the reply, "I am a whole man for one thing at once." When you get into the way of doing with your might that which you have to do, it is astonishing what you will accomplish. There was much of that in St. Paul. "This one thing I do." The devil trembles at Christian men who do one thing. He trembles at men who throw their whole vital force into that whom they are about. It is a grand power such men have. Martin Luther was a man of that sort; but don't suppose that I am going to give you a list of the names of men of which Luther and Wesley are but types. There is no occasion, for they have printed their names too deep in the world's history to be forgotten. You know them. It was not because they were so many feet taller than their fellow-men; it was because they gave all they had to God, and because they lived in one flame of earnest, holy determination. If there were not another Christian in the world, and if you, dear friends, in this house, got into this flame of earnest, holy determination, there would be a sufficient number of you to revolutionise the world; and yet, for the lack of this, there is not a sufficient number to revolutionise Blackheath. If the whole fire of your being were thrown into the one determination to do service to God and good to man, to glorify Him and bless them, why, there would be enough of it to fill the world.

I want you, young people, to set out in the way to-night, and to do it thoughtfully. I am anxious for you to set out for the kingdom, but not to do it without thinking; and I want to tell you how to set out even as Christ tells you. Sit down and think. Will you take this step to-night? Determine in your minds that you will do so, and carry out your resolve with perseverance.

But if you are determined to set out to-night for heaven, let me tell you that the battle is not over: you are only putting on the armour. Oh, you will have many a battle. You are only binding on the sandals; but, oh, you see the jasper city looming in the distance, and you will have the footsteps by your side of Him whose feet were pierced. You will also have blessed company, and will be cheered by blessed hopes. You have a long journey before you. Never mind! You will have the Lord for your helper. Now, the man who wants to do this in earnest must do it thoughtfully and conscientiously.

Young people, I will tell you what is hindering some of you a little. You have had the thought, "I would set out and give myself to the Church if I could get some of my young friends to go with me." Suppose you start first. There are some things that appeal to me in such a way that I dare not look to the right or the left; I must do them at once, because it is my duty, and duty won't wait. A captain, if he were setting sail from London to some distant port, perhaps would be glad to have some consort ship with him that might happen to be going the same way; but he would not stop because there was not one. His cargo must be delivered yonder, and so he starts. So, I tell you, set out towards the kingdom to-night, and do it religiously. Be determined and say, "Come what will, I will do what conscience tells me. My conscience tells me I ought to be a godly man. I ought from this very hour to serve the Lord, and, God helping me, I will." Let it come to that. Many people want years to set out to the New Jerusalem; but you, having formed the determination, must act up to it at once, and you must also do it

in a martyr spirit. It may be that you will not be called to the martyr sacrifice, but you ought to have the martyr spirit. Some years ago, in America, there was what is called a large "camp-meeting" held. Many of you must have read one of Mr. Punshon's beautiful descriptions of an American camp-meeting, and must, therefore, know the way in which it is conducted. This sort of meeting is very suitable for a great country like that, but is not so necessary in one like ours; but very often they meet together from large districts of the country, and in some places the gatherings are so arranged that day and night there is a service appointed for every hour for a week. It was so on the occasion to which I am about to refer. A gentleman, accompanied by his wife, went out of curiosity to this camp-meeting, and somehow, as they were looking at the various services going on, they got separated. The lady was drawn very near a circle of persons whose hearts had been deeply touched, and who were seeking with tears and entreaties forgiveness and that peace which passeth understanding. One individual saw her looking on the group with extreme sadness, and said to her, "Lady, have you peace with God?" Tears filled her eyes as she said, "Sir, I would give the world if I had." "Why not," said he, "join with those who are seeking the very blessing you want?" It didn't require another invitation; she was among the seekers after salvation, praying earnestly. Some one saw her, and met her husband and said, "Why, your wife is praying like a mad thing among those mad Methodists." He was a proud man, and the news almost broke his heart. He was very soon upon the spot, and in a stern manner bade her at once rise and come with him, or she should never come at all. "Husband," said she, "let me stay till God gives peace to my soul." "I have said," was his reply, "that if you don't rise at once, you shall never come at all." It was a crisis. "I tell you what," she said. "I have never disobeyed you in anything that related to this world; but, husband, I have a soul, and at all risks it must be saved." He went away. A gentleman who was much calmer,

of course, and who had seen the whole thing, followed him, and said to him, "My friend, you don't know the power of conscience. I think as highly as you do of a husband's authority, but it won't do in a case like this. You had better return, and it will be all the better for you." He didn't want much pressing, after all, to be brought back; and when he got to the meeting again his wife's soul had been filled with the blessed peace of God. It was not long ere the Lord spoke peace to one so determined as she was. She had made the greatest sacrifices that could be made, and from that moment the Lord had blessed her soul; and when the husband returned he found her soul full of the spirit of praise, full of love to God, and love to him, and love to the world. They returned home and retired to rest. It was no night of rest to him. He was thinking of that scene, and could not get out of his heart the vivid impression it had made; and at last, about midnight, he waked his now happy wife, and said, "My dear, I can't remain here longer; I must go back again to the meeting." And they rose, and back they went to the camp-meeting, through the dark forest. He found the very spot where his wife had knelt. It seemed to him as if no spot on earth could be so sacred, and on that very spot he knelt, and gave his heart to God; and before the morning sun had gilded the tops of the forest trees, they were returning home rejoicing in God together. You see what came of determination. There was the martyr spirit. You must give all to God. Be determined at all risks to be Christians, and this must be your determination for ever.

I don't like to hear at Methodist class-meetings what some of you tell me about the conduct of certain persons tempting them almost to give up the whole thing, and turn back to the world. Why, my friend, you are married. You have taken the Lord for better or for worse; and you have taken Him for ever; so don't talk of giving Him up. It is all settled. "For me to live is Christ," said Paul. Be determined to go forward, onward, and upward. It may be with you, as it has

often been with others, a contest to the last. I recollect a brother minister saying to me when I was a very young man, "I remember being sent for, and going to see a very blessed old man. I had never seen a dying Christian; and as I had read a lot of poetry about the deathbeds of the Lord's people, I had got the notion that they all died very quietly. As I drew near to his bedside I said, 'O! sir, it is all peace now.' It took the old man a little while to get breath enough to speak; and when he did, the sound of his voice seemed to come from beneath the bed-clothes, and chilled me. I could almost have fallen, but I waited a minute, and I then heard what he said. He said, 'No, it is not all peace yet. I must wear the halberd a little longer, and I must carry the sword a little further. It is a hard fight; but I shall get the white robe and the crown by-and-by. It is a hard fight; but it is worth it.' I have never forgotten the lesson I learned at that death-bed."

As far as my experience has gone, I have found that young Christians and timorous Christians really die more triumphantly. There are exceptions, however. I will tell you how this is. It is the Lord's kindness. He does not let the devil have a shot at them at the last, because they could not bear it. Do you remember how John Bunyan describes this? He says that when Mr. Fearing went to cross the river of death, "the water was lower than ever it was known." So it is with those who are like Mr. Fearing; but when you see that there is a fight when old people come to die, you may conclude that they are getting their last victory. They are getting the serpent's head under their heel; and they will take their last leap from the serpent's head to the throne. Lord Malmesbury told his fellow-peers in the House of Lords, when the Crimean War was just beginning, how those ships of the Russians went to Sinope, and attacked those frigates of the Turks that were so inferior. The Turks knew they were sinking, but they got their guns ready shotted, and when the muzzles were not six inches above the water they gave their last broadside.

Then, you know, they went down and sank beneath the waves. But not like those men does the Christian sink. It is true the boat goes down, like a sinking wreck; but the soul ascends, and the victor goes home. What a blessed end is this!

Be in earnest. Why should you? Let the text speak. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." It is now or never. Remember that there are two lives—the earthly life and the spiritual life. The earthly life can never be lived over again. The creature that enters this world from the serpent's egg is born a snake, it lives a snake, a snake it will die, and never be anything else. This poor life is doing its work; and when thou diest the books of this life will be sealed up and put away; and when the judgment comes, the books will come down, and thou wilt be judged for the deeds done in the body. Oh! may God help you to see that this life is a very important life, and that on what thou art doing to-day depends eternity. Oh! don't do anything of which God and your own conscience will disapprove. Young people, come to Jesus at once! Supposing you say, "I will do so, but I would like to be married first." The likelihood is that if you wait for that you will marry somebody who does not love God, and the result will be that you will be far less likely to come to Him than before. Those who take you, and like you in that state, will like you to keep in that state. "Oh," says another, "I am starting in business, and I should like to see that settled first." No; if you get into business without Christ, you are likely to keep without Him. Your mind will get full of this world's cares; you will get into the outer circle of a whirlpool, then into the second circle, then into the third, and as you go on towards the deadly centre, you will be sucked down. To-night is the best time in the world for you to decide. Habits have not fettered you so much; evil things are not pressing round you so much. It is better for you to decide to-night—"Now, while it is called to-day."

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

A SERMON

*Preached in Liverpool Road Wesleyan Chapel, on Sunday Morning,
October 22, 1871.*

BY THE REV. WILLIAM O. SIMPSON.

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”—ROM. xii. 5.

IT seems to me, my friends, that this passage sets forth the life of the Church in a twofold aspect—first, as that life is derived and Divine; secondly, as that life is mutual and communicable.

The life is derived and Divine: “We, being many, are one body in Christ.” It is mutual and communicable: “Everyone members one of another.”

And now, turning your attention, in the first place, to the life of the Church as it is derived and Divine, you will perceive that in this passage there is an analogy drawn between the frame of a man and the Church of Christ. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.” “Everyone members one of another.” Mark that. Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul says, “Jesus Christ, the Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” Writing to the Colossians, he speaks of himself, and he says, “who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the affections of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the Church.”

Now, looking at these passages of Scripture, you see that, in the first place, there is an analogy between the human frame and the Church of God. For what is the union of a body, of hand and arm and shoulder? It is not a mere mechanical union, like what you find in a factory with all its elaborate machinery. When the steam-power is on, the machinery is at work, each part fulfilling its place; but when the steam is put off, the machinery remains. It is not so with the body of man. It is a union of life, so that when the life is arrested, the union falls to pieces, and the strong linking together, which has lasted, perhaps, through seventy years, is snapped asunder, and the parts fall away in common confusion and corruption. Just so the union of believers in a church is not a mechanical arrangement. No ecclesiastical organiser can make a church. The union of souls one with another in the Church of Christ is a union of life—of life derived directly from Christ; and unless there be this personal reception of life from Him, unity of worship, unity of creed, unity of organisation, cannot make a church. There may be a sect, a party, a society; but there can be no church. The Church is a unity of life.

But you will notice in the passages I have quoted, that there is a still more sacred illustration or analogy. The Church is not only said to be like the body, but it is said to be *the* body of Christ. "He is Head over all things to His Church, which is His body;" and, in the second passage which I quoted, Paul says, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." You will see that the Church is spoken of as "the body of Christ." There was given to our blessed Redeemer a natural body. The brow that for us was pierced with thorns; the hands that were stretched out to give eyesight to the blind; the arms that were extended to take the little ones unto Himself; the feet which were washed by the tears of the woman who was a sinner, and that were anointed with ointment, and wiped with the hair of her head;

the side which was punctured by the spear of the soldier—all these parts of the body of Christ were as real, as material, and, I was going to say, as gross as the same parts in ourselves. But in all these members of that natural body there was ever present the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person. In that natural body, God was manifest in the flesh, seen of man, believed on in the world. That natural body has passed away; but there is a mystical body, and the different abilities, the varied gifts, the diversified mental constitutions of believers in Christ Jesus, take places corresponding to that brow, those hands, those arms, those feet, that side; and they form the mystical body of Christ; and so the apostle, in the passage I have just quoted, says that the Church is His body.

Now, just as in the natural body of Christ there was the Divine glory, so through the diversified gifts of the believers in a church, men who are wearing the frame of manhood, men who are sustaining the ordinary relationships of human life in business and in the home, there glows a Divine life, the life of Christ. We are partakers of the Divine nature. And thus the analogy is worked out for us in the Scriptures. What the natural body was to the person of Christ, the mystical body is to the glorified Christ. We are His body, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

The agent of this life in the Church is the Holy Spirit of God. "We are all made," the apostle says, "to drink into one spirit." As there is not a separate tenure of life for one finger apart from the rest of the body, and as even the minute extremity of the finger drinks of the common life of the whole frame, just so we are all made to drink of one Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is the life-force of the Church, "the Author and the Giver of life."

Now, union in the mystical body of Christ is altogether dependent upon personal faith, or the coming of each believing man directly to Christ, as the life, the truth, and the way. Only by personal faith in Him can anyone be united to His

body. Here a suggestion occurs, and it is this: "All that you say is very good. It is mystical, secret, not visible, not tangible." All the processes that I have just now described are originated in the sphere of mind; and no human eye can penetrate into that vista in which the soul moves towards Christ, and Christ moves towards the soul. "How then," it may be asked, "can the Church of God in any sense be called a body? For a body is that which can be seen, and that which can be handled, and which stands out separate from other substances." And here it is, my friends, that we come to notice the fact that whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is never suffered to be an isolated person. He is called upon to confess Christ; and he is not only called upon to confess Christ, but he cannot help confessing Him. The life which he has derived from Christ calls for a plain, open, outward confession of His faith. The Lord has Himself given to us the great symbol of that union in the case of all believing persons—given it to us in the sacrament of His own death. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, expressly brings this forth to us: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

Now, without entering into the minutiae of criticism and of exposition in regard to that passage, the central thought is this, that as you partake of the bread and wine of the sacrament, and it becomes part of you, melted into your blood and into the tissues of your frame, just so by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you become a sharer of His life, and a sharer of His nature. You are one bread in Him; you are of His very life. This, then, is the Lord's own symbol by which the invisible becomes visible, and the hidden secrets of mind and of faith have an outward and local expression.

I cannot leave this part of my subject without protesting thoughtfully but strongly against the neglect of the Lord's

Supper. I would say thoughtfully, my brethren, because one set of men in our day have turned the Lord's Supper into a Mass, and themselves into priests, and the bread and wine into the transubstantiated material form of the Lord Jesus; and we condemn them. Are we to allow ourselves to go to an opposite extreme? And when He has said to us, "Do this," are we to reply, "We won't"? And, further, if the Ritualists, with all their display on sacramental days, provoke our censure, can we escape our Master's censure if we neglect to show forth His death until He come? I would speak with the utmost kindness and tenderness and sympathy to those who keep away from the Lord's Supper from motives of self-distrust and who say they are not worthy; but I would remind them that this very absence of worth is the best argument they can have for coming to that supper; for this bread and wine are for us to symbolise the body of Christ and the blood of Christ. What did it come for? Why were there a body and blood at all? Why did that body move about amongst men, leaving mercy along its every path? Why was that body broken at that bloodshedding? He came, He says Himself, "to seek and to save that which was lost." Will you, then, find in your own unworthiness and in your own lack, as you think, of a right preparation of mind, an argument for not coming, when He finds in them an argument for coming? When He said, "Because you are lost, I am come to seek you," will you answer, "Because I am lost, I will not come?" If there is in you the first penitent desire for the life of Christ, do not hang back, but express it in His own appointed way, in remembering His body and blood. But what shall I say to those who profess to have faith in Christ, and to have received life from Him, and yet hold back from the very form which expresses the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His Church? My brethren, if, being many, we are one body in Christ, let us manifest a regular conscientious regard to this outward expression of that union; and depend upon it, as we do so, as certainly as a pain or puncture in the extremity of my frame

travels more swiftly than electricity to the brain and disturbs it, so surely will the prayer and the penitence and the earnestness which we feel at the table of the Lord travel up to Him who is the Head, even Christ Jesus. Thus you see concerning the life of the Church, that it is derived and Divine, and that the Church, the mystical body of Christ, is filled by His Spirit, and its living unity has expression in the Lord's Supper.

I now come to the second part of my subject; and, mark you, we must not separate the parts. The same passage of Scripture that says, "we are one body in Christ," says also, "we are every one members one of another." Every one members one of another; and yet I am not certain that we have not in a recent discussion neglected this side of the life of the Church. Men are often in the habit of saying, "Can't I be a Christian alone, can't I hold on to the life of Christ in my own personal faith and in my own personal character?" Certainly, certainly. The life comes from Him, but all are members one of another; so, that you perceive, the text contemplates no such thing as isolation. It represents to us an isolated Christian as an abnormal man, an exhibition, a curiosity. "Every one members one of another;" so that just as by faith, and prayer, and penitence, we hold on to Christ and receive His life, we are, by mutual knowledge and mutual contact, constantly available to give a channel for the common life. For the members of the body are not only members of the head, but one of another, and are so closely compacted that the common life finds a constant vehicle of access, a constant mode of travel and of sympathy; and so the Church should make such arrangements as agree with the fact that the Lord has given to her an express and Divine symbol of a heavenly connection with Christ Himself. The Church is bound to give an expression to the second law of the Church's life, namely, membership one of another.

It appears to me, my friends, that this membership one of another, and this arrangement for it, are necessities of the

Church's growth. In a certain passage in the Epistle to the Colossians Paul is speaking of certain unbelieving men, and he says they don't "hold the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Therefore you will perceive an emphatic recognition of dependence upon Christ: "holding the head." But side by side with that there is the declaration that the increase which is received of God can travel on to its own fulness, only by certain human contingencies, by human channels, and that it is nourished by that which is implied by the joints and bands.

Now-a-days we talk very much about the increase of the life of God in the Church and in the world. Some men, with a prudish censoriousness, say we must have more intellectual power in the pulpit; others, that we must have other things than what we have in sermons; and others, that we must multiply agencies of labour amongst the poor and the neglected. All these things may be perfectly right. But what does this passage say? That the increase of the life of God is dependent upon that which every joint and every band supply. If there be a joint out of place in the arm, the arm is useless. If there be a paralysed muscle in the hand, the hand is useless. Thus we come to this very important principle, that the life of the Church of God is nourished by a union so compact and so close as to be resembled to the body, with its joints and marrow.

Is it up to the mark of this passage that we meet together to sing and pray? Is that anything like the union of the joints and bands of the body? Of course it is not. You come here, sing, pray, read, and hear, and go home to get your dinners; and that is all till the next time. Call that a union! Again, is it enough that we come to our more private means of grace—prayer-meetings and the like—and improve each other's gifts at the missionary meeting, Sunday School meeting, and addresses, and so on? Oh! does that come within this thought? That, you see, is a ministration of gifts; but

this is a ministration of life. And, going yet further, it is quite evident that the passage which I am now discussing contemplates a union very different from that of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper typifies my own personal union with Christ; but the life here contemplated is my union with other believing souls. Now, even with regard to the Lord's Supper, with its occasional recurrence, and its consequent isolation of the faithful in Christ, do we come up to this? I think not. The two things lie upon two different tracks; the one showing life with Christ, the other a divinely originated union with believers.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul again uses the same illustration, and says, "The whole body is fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." If, then, the Church is to grow, she must have, and she must keep in vigorous exercise, an arrangement which rises up to this point, "Everyone members one of another." Such an arrangement, my friends, is equally necessary as the product, or rather the exhibition, of our dependence upon one another. You will remember that exquisite chapter in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where there is a metaphorical dialogue between various members of the human frame: "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." The whole body is fitly framed together in mutual dependence. I take it that St. Paul does not use a mere illustration, but that there is an aptitude in his words to express his thoughts. Who are the eye, and the head, and the ear, but the intelligent, the cultivated, the cultured—those who have had the advantage of education, and have the present advantage of position? These are what St. Paul calls the more honourable and the more comely members. On the other hand, who are the hands, and the feet, the less comely members, but those who have not had such advantages; who have more

energy than intellect ; who have greater emotion than meditation ; who have greater impulse than power or capacity of investigation ? These are the active workers of the Church. They are not over thoughtful, but though often impulsive, are useful members of the Church.

Now then, just apply the apostle's analogy. What are you to do ? Get a grand chapel ? Get an elaborate form of service ? Get an intellectual minister, who preaches sermons that you cannot distinguish from essays ? Is that the right thing ? Then what will be the result ? The eye and the head and the ear will say to the hands and to the feet, " We have no need of you." Mephibosheth will fall from his nurse's arms, and become lame of his feet. He may grow cultured, and may have an intellectual brow and a far-reaching vision, and look out upon sweet landscapes ; but he will have neither hands nor feet. The history of the Church has shown us that when you take away the unintellectual and the uncultured from the work of the Church, and leave it simply to the other part of the body, you very soon lose life out of light ; you very soon lose faith out of creed ; and you leave the church powerless for God, withering where it stands. The eye cannot say of the hand, " I have no need of thee."

But then, what about the hands and the feet ? My answer is this again, that history has again and again shown that when a very strongly marked division of classes in the body politic, like the division caused by the feudal system, has separated the hands and the feet from the eye and the head, and impulse has been left to itself, there have been some of the most fearful products in the way of license and antinomianism that the world has ever known. The Latter-day Saints and the other manifestations of so-called religion in the Western World are the results of this separation of the hand and the foot from the head and the eye. No, no ; if we would have the Church grow up with the increase of God unto the edifying of itself in love, every church should have within herself such arrangement that these different gifts and

abilities could be exercised in constant harmony. The eye and the ear should be ready to receive the impulse of the hand and the foot ; and the hand and the foot should be ready to receive the guidance of the ear and the eye. Thus it is that we are to be members one of another.

Again, such an arrangement as recognises this principle is needful for the beauty of mutual care and mutual protection. St. Paul says, in that exquisite chapter in the Epistle to the Corinthians, that "the members should have the same care one for another." They should be not only dependent, but also responsible for the care one of another. Now, just look at the matter from an every-day point of view. Suppose you have come home from business, say on a Saturday afternoon, and you feel rather tired ; but as your eye looks out of your window on to the landscape, everything appears most beautiful, and you say, "I should like to have a stroll this afternoon, and listen to the music of the birds, and look at the lights and shades of this glorious landscape." "But," say the feet, "I am tired, for I have been trudging up and down the city all this morning, and I must have rest." But the owner of them both says, "Who guided you in safety along the labyrinth of streets, and took you to your familiar place in the office, and brought you back here?" And the feet are obliged to acknowledge that they could not have gone this round without the guiding power of the head and the eyes. "Well, then," say the eyes, "you must now come with us ;" and as they go along there is a bramble in the path, and the eyes see it, and tell the feet, and the feet draw back, and these together appeal to the hands, and say, "Now, you must take that bramble out of the path for us, or else we shall be wounded, and our progress will be hindered." "No," says the hand, "I cannot think of that ; I have been busy all day writing letters and casting up figures, and I cannot run the risk." "But," says the owner of the three, "how did you get to the office to cast your figures and write your letters ? who guided you so skilfully ? Why, the feet and the eyes guided you ; so take away the bramble." So

you see that all parts of the material body have to work together, and do so to their mutual advantage.

Now, then, we are so much "every one members one of another," that in our Church arrangements we are to have the same care one for another that is manifested by the members of our material structure.

I have only one point more, which is, that we are so to recognise that we are "members of one another" as to give a swift and immediate channel to sympathy, that if any member suffer all the members may suffer with him. That is the apostle's doctrine. Did you never see a piece of marble representing an individual extracting a thorn from his heel? Study that piece of marble; put your life into all its chaste lines; and you will see what it means, discovering what is the matter with him. Something is the matter with the heel. People take a great deal of trouble about their eyes, their heads, and their hands; but it is not so often that they think about their heels. The heel is one of the least comely parts. What is the matter with the youth thus represented? A thorn is in his heel. Only a thorn of the size of a pin's point! Only a thorn! yet what is he doing? Why, every muscle in the body is moved, and the sigh is heard even to painfulness, and the eye searches for the cause, and the delicate sense of touch finds it and removes it; and thus the whole body has suffered with one member, and the whole body rejoices with the healing of that member. Now, that is just the Church. If there be any member, however low or however ignorant, who receives a puncture, there ought to be an organisation of sympathy so close that the members suffer with him.

And, now, my friends, these seem to me to be the principles of the second part of my text, that while the life of the Church is derived and Divine, the Church has a life also which is mutual and communicable; and that the growth of the Church, the dependence of the Church, the character of the Church, and the sympathy of the Church, demand the recognition of this second principle. "Every one members one of another."

And now, I have just given you the reason why I am a Methodist preacher. I don't think the Church of England offers so many standpoints, and has the niches of usefulness so ready for anybody who tries to fill them as this Church. I don't think it would trouble me much to go into the Church of England, or even to become an Independent minister. They are very, very convenient about their creeds now-a-days; and they ask so very few questions about Calvinism, and election, that I don't really think it would trouble me much to be an Independent minister; but why did I twenty-one years ago become a Methodist preacher? and why am I now a Methodist preacher? Because, while other churches in some degree and in some proportion have recognised this second law, I found in this church a more direct, emphatic, and methodical recognition of it than in any other church with which I was then or am now acquainted. For that reason I am, and expect to be, a Methodist preacher. In short, I see in Methodism this distinct recognition of the second law, "Every one members one of another." Having just said that, you will say at once that there are practical details of this somewhat theoretical sermon which deserve our consideration. I shall, however, reserve them for the discourse of this evening. Having endeavoured to lay down the principles, it will then be my object to show how far those principles are practicable in that system of which I have been honoured to form a part. May God add His blessing to these words, for His mercy's sake! Amen.



THE WORSHIP OF JESUS.

A SERMON

*Preached at the Brunswick Chapel, Gt. Dover Street, Borough,
on Sunday Evening, October 15, 1871.*

36th ANNIVERSARY.

BY THE REV W. COOKE, D.D.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”
—MATTHEW ii. 1-11.

IT is a long text; but I shall dwell chiefly upon the first, second, ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses. We have here a very instructive and interesting narrative. Let us glance at its leading features, and the great moral truths which it inculcates.

Whence came these remarkable strangers? The passage says from the East, thus giving us the hemisphere, but not naming the country; from which we may infer that the place lay far away to the east of Jerusalem.

Who were these illustrious visitors? Some of the ancients have said that they were kings, and have even given us their names. That, however, I think, is extremely doubtful; but if they were not kings, they were unquestionably men of some importance and station, for they had means ample enough, apparently, to defray the expenses of their long journey, and to provide presents fit to lay at the feet of a sovereign. In our text they are called "wise men." In the original Greek it is *magoi*; and we are told that that term was originally and properly applied to a distinct class of men who were the counsellors of kings, and the spiritual advisers of the people. They were men devoted exclusively to the acquisition of learning and the promotion of religion. They were wise men, and devout as well as wise. Such were the men who came to visit Jesus.

But what was the object of their visit? They came not as ambassadors having a political object; they came not as merchants to buy and sell and get gain; they came not merely as philosophers to explore the land of Judæa, and solve some geographical problem; but they came to see and to worship the infant Jesus, who was born King of the Jews. There was another king on the throne of Judæa at that time—viz., Herod the Great; but "great" as he was, they came not to seek and to worship him. They evidently regarded this Infant as greater than Herod, greater than the Roman Emperor, greater than any earthly monarch, and greater than any human being; but in what could His greatness consist? What was it to be the King of the Jews? The Jews at that time were a conquered and despised people, and their country was only a small province of the mighty Roman Empire. His greatness, therefore, could not consist in territorial possession. It must be something personal, something in Himself. There must be in that Infant attributes of greatness transcending those of any earthly being, and so great as to induce these wise men to leave their retirement, undertake this long journey, and come to render Him homage. Well, the whole is explained in one word: they regarded this mysterious Infant as no other than the true Messiah—that Mighty Potentate, that Illustrious Deliverer who had been foretold for forty centuries, and expected by mankind at large. It is very remarkable that at that time there was a very vivid and general expectation throughout all the East that some great

personage was about to appear in Judæa. Tacitus and Suetonius, Roman historians, both state this fact. Josephus, a Jewish historian, asserts the same thing, and even the Evangelist Luke tells us that "the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not." Now, these wise men partook of this general expectation; and they had also a distinct revelation given to them that the Christ was come, and that the star was the sign of His appearance.

Perhaps you may ask me, From what source could the Gentiles obtain so much information respecting Christ? I reply, they obtained it from the study of the Old Testament prophecies, which were widely diffused among the various nations of the earth; and God had also given to them personally a distinct revelation, causing them to know that the Messiah had actually come, and had appointed that mysterious sign in the heavens to guide them to the very place where He might be found.

Now the question arises, What was that mysterious luminous object here called "the star?" Was it one of the astronomical stars or planets in the heavens? No; for its position was too near our earth for that. Was it then a comet? Its motions were more distinct than those of any of the heavenly bodies. What was it then? Was it a meteor? No. It was, I believe, the Shekinah. God is light; and light is the usual symbol of the Divine presence; "for He clotheth Himself with light as with a garment;" and you remember that when the Jewish tabernacle was consecrated there came down a Divine glory which filled the place with surpassing splendour. That was the Shekinah, the symbol of God's presence. When the temple was dedicated by Solomon, you remember, there was a great splendour which filled the sanctuary with a glorious light, so bright that the priests could not stand to minister before the Lord, and when they saw it, they fell on their faces. That was the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine presence. When the Redeemer was born in Bethlehem, you remember, the glory shone all around. But it was not the glory of the angels. It was the glory of the Lord. When the angel appeared on the mount, his person was clothed with a splendour surpassing the noon-day sun. It was the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine presence. And in this instance God again gave the Shekinah

—a constant and concentrated light, a luminous orb shining in the heavens, as the sign that the Redeemer had come, and the symbol of the presence of the mighty God amongst His people. And when the wise men saw that object, it filled them with delight, it established their confidence, it confirmed the revelation which God had given to them, and it enkindled in their souls a desire to behold the mysterious stranger, whoever he was; and, therefore, up they rose, collected their treasures, mounted their camels, and went upon their journey to see and to worship the new-born King of the Jews, the mysterious luminous object going before them all the way, and conducting them to the very spot, as the fiery pillar conducted the Israelites in the desert to the Land of Promise.

But when the wise men came into Judæa an incident occurred. They appear to have left the guidance of the star, and entered into the city of Jerusalem. Why did they go there? Had the Divine star led them to the place? No, for the Messiah was not there. It was the wrong place, and the star could not lead them wrong. It appears to me they may have thought thus:—"Well now, Jerusalem is the metropolis of the kingdom, and the Messiah is sure to be born there." And they turned aside and said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him; but we have fallen into an error." They were brought into perplexity, and even into danger with Herod the king. No doubt they had recourse to prayer; the Almighty in mercy interposed; they were brought to know that they were in the wrong place, that the Messiah was born, not in the great city of Jerusalem, but in the humble village of Bethlehem; and having discovered their error, they set out afresh. When they set out again, the star, which seems to have been withdrawn for a time, reappeared, and filled them with ecstatic joy. "When they saw the star" again, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy;" and now that effulgent orb leads them on, and they faithfully follow its course. Soon the turrets of Bethlehem appear; and now, wonderful to state, that bright orb stands still. Not only so; it sheds down a stream of glory upon the very spot where the infant Saviour lies. Now they quicken their footsteps, and their hearts beat with joy. They enter the city of Bethlehem; they pass on to the spot where the brightness shines; they enter there, and

find a stranger—the infant Jesus, with Mary his mother; and they fall down and worship Him. “And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

That is the narrative. Now what are the great truths that it teaches us? Let us try to name some of them.

In the first place, then, this narrative teaches us—

THAT THERE IS A FAITH WHICH CAN RISE SUPERIOR TO ALL NATURAL AND EXTERNAL IMPROBABILITIES. A weak faith may suffice when the evidence is brilliant and powerful; but it requires a strong faith to believe when the evidence is feeble, and truth is clouded with mystery. And yet there are instances of a noble faith rising superior to all natural difficulties, and believing when the evidence was weak; and there is a cowardly unbelief which rejects all evidence, however bright it may be.

Now there were three circumstances in the Redeemer's life when the evidence of His Divinity and mission was reduced to the minimum—viz., when He was in the cradle, when He was on the cross, and when He was in the gloomy sepulchre. And yet these wise men could believe in Him when they saw Him a helpless infant on His mother's knee; and the dying thief could believe in Him when he saw Him a bleeding victim on the cross; and the faithful women believed in Him when they saw Him a corpse in the gloomy sepulchre.

But unbelief will reject the most brilliant evidence, and we had an example a short time ago, when Mr. Voysey, who was ostracised from the Church of England because of his infidelity, was addressing a London audience, and he uttered these remarkable words:—hear them, Sunday School teachers—“I would not believe even if I saw with my own eyes a man rise from the dead, unless his testimony accorded with my own opinions.” Audacious man! The Lord Jesus Christ described thy character eighteen hundred years ago, when He said, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

There were plenty of audacious men like this in the days of our Lord. The Jewish priests, Scribes, and Pharisees would not believe, even when confronted with the Redeemer's majestic person! They heard His wonderful discourses, and yet would not believe! They beheld His stupendous miracles, and yet would not believe! They saw Him with

their own eyes cast out demons with a rebuke, and cleanse the leper with a word, and restore the dead at His command, and yet they would not believe! Though confounded, they would not be convinced; for no amount of evidence could meet the exorbitant demands of infidelity. Yet, to show you what unbelief can do, these very men shortly afterwards imbrued their hands in the Redeemer's innocent blood. Noble patrons are these of the faith of Mr. Voysey, of Bishop Colenso, and others of that school.

But from these desecrators of both faith and reason, turn aside to contemplate the simple, honest trust of these Eastern philosophers who came to worship Jesus. They had heard none of His sublime discourses, yet they believed in Him. They had seen not one of His splendid miracles, yet they believed in Him. They saw Him, but in poverty, and neglect, and contempt. No doubt the wise men thought, as they were on their journey, that the very moment they could put their eyes on Jesus, their faith would be turned into ocular demonstration, and their highest hope would be realised. And when they came to Jerusalem, what did they observe? Did they find public rejoicings, national anthems, exciting proclamations, and the shrill sound of trumpets welcoming the Saviour? No; an ominous silence! Did they see a stately palace? No; a lonely cottage. A wealthy prince? No; a peasant child. A queenly mother? No; a humble matron. A lordly father? No; a rustic carpenter. No crown, no sceptre, no throne there; no royal attendants, no pageantry, no equipage. All the symptoms of royalty were absent; and all the symptoms of poverty were present. How remarkable all this! Had the wise men been carnal, they might have been startled at the spectacle, and said, "Have we not been deceived and made the victims of strange hallucinations? How can the offspring of a peasant mother be the Mighty Potentate whom prophets have spoken of for forty centuries? Is it possible?" But faith, amidst all these natural difficulties and astounding circumstances, rose superior to all. They said, "Have we not heard the voice of God? Hath not Jehovah spoken to us? Is not His that starry sign? O yes! We can't explain the cause of His poverty; we can't explain how it is that He has been thus neglected by His people; but we can see the sign of God, and we are assured that this is the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

O my friends, that was the faith of the patriarchs who hoped against hope, and the faith of prophets who wept for Him while long centuries swept past, and mighty kingdoms rose and fell. That was the faith of Zacharias and Elisabeth, who believed in Him before He was born. The same must be our faith—a faith which can rise superior to natural and physical improbabilities; a faith which can triumph over all surrounding circumstances; a faith which never staggers in the presence of the scowling sceptic; a faith which staggers not at the mysterious Gospel, but takes Jehovah at His word, like good John Nelson, who said, “I am no more afraid of God’s promise failing than I am of dropping to the centre of the earth!”

This interesting narrative shows us—

WORSHIP RENDERED TO JESUS IN HIS DEEPEST POVERTY AND HUMILITY. The wise men “fell down and worshipped Him.” Remarkable fact is that! Just look at those Eastern sages throwing themselves prostrate before the infant Jesus! What a spectacle was that! And there are some theologians that have thought to exonerate these men from the charge of idolatry by an officious criticism which seeks to prove that the verb *proskuneo* is intended to signify “civil respect.” I know the verb implies that; but I know also that it expresses the highest homage that is rendered to God in heaven and earth by angels and by men—worship which it would be idolatry to render to any being but God Himself. Hence the declaration where the same word occurs, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” And what is worship? It includes reverence, humility, confidence, love, veneration, and supreme devotion, expressed in suitable language, and in a becoming attitude; and such was the worship rendered by these wise men.

Prophecy sustained this confidence. What meant that text of prophecy which was on their lips when they left Jerusalem on their way to Bethlehem? It was this: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” There the attributes of eternity and independence are ascribed to Him. And what meant that other prophecy, with which no doubt they were well acquainted, “Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is

given; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Father of Eternity, The Prince of Peace?"

These prophecies proclaim His Godhead as well as His humanity. And that radiant orb which gave the sign of His coming was altogether a symbol of His Divinity, and was altogether a miracle; for, behold, it shone by day as well as by night. It adapted its various speed to the slow and varied pace of these travellers. It moved in various directions—now west, now south; and now, like an intelligent being, it stood still, and flung its glory upon the very spot where the infant Jesus lay.

Now here we have the laws of gravitation, of celestial dynamics, and of optics, all subordinated to do homage to the infant Jesus, and to guide the men to the spot where He must be found. We have nature altering her law, or at least altering its operations, in order to do homage to the incarnate God; and therefore their worship was right.

It is a remarkable thing that on the very day, at the very time when these wise men were worshipping Jesus, the angels in heaven were worshipping Jesus. How do I prove that? Hear God's word: "And again, when He bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." All the angels—cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, *all* the angels, the whole hierarchy of heaven, worshipped Him. Says the Socinian, "I will not worship Jesus." No, *thou* wilt not; but angels have always worshipped Him. They worshipped Him before His incarnation, and at the time of His incarnation, and they have worshipped Him ever since, and are worshipping Him now. Thus, in that bright world where no obscurity can dim the vision, where no prejudice can warp the judgment, where no corrupt usage can vitiate the heart, but where men and angels see truth in the light of the Divine presence, and where worship rises to its intensest spirituality, angels and men, the whole hierarchy of heaven, worship and adore the Lamb of God. The wise men were right, and we are right, in worshipping Jesus. We have only begun here a sweet enjoyment destined to be perpetuated for ever.

Again, in this narrative we see—

THE PROPER PLACE OF WEALTH. Where is that? At the feet of Jesus. When the wise men saw Him, they opened

their caskets, and they presented unto Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; and this homage was expressive of their personal devotedness to Him. What did it mean but a confession of His sovereignty, and of their allegiance; His supremacy, and their submission; His proprietorship of universal nature, and their tribute; His right to govern, and their duty to obey? It was the expression of their love, and of the consecration of their hearts and lives to His service and glory. It was just the utterance of that beautiful sentiment we often sing, and ought always to feel:—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

This interesting narrative teaches also—

THAT LEARNING AND SCIENCE SHOULD JOIN WITH REVELATION TO HONOUR JESUS, all being laid at His feet. Who were these remarkable visitors who had come from a distant country? Not the ignorant and the uneducated; but men of intellectual culture, men of mental advancement. They were refined philosophers. They were the leaders of thought, and of the “public opinion” of their country; but whatever attainments they had realised rendered them worthy of the title, “wise men.” They conjoined these with revelation. They were taught of God, and they were led to lay their science and their learning and their all at the feet of Jesus.

My friends, we ought ever to regard true learning as the handmaid of religion; and science is only a development of Divine works, of illustrations of Divine character. What is Jesus but the child of the world? What is real science but the discovery of the truth? What is Jesus but the truth—truth in its essence, truth in the concrete as well as in the abstract? Between true science and religion there is neither rivalry nor antagonism; but they are both distinct parts of one great and comprehensive system of illumination by which God educates the human mind, and elevates, ennobles, and purifies the soul. They ought, therefore, never to be regarded as antagonistic to each other. To divorce science from religion is to promote infidelity, and thus becloud the intellect and betray the character and the passions of man. Not such was the conduct of these wise men. They connected both. Like the great Sir Isaac Newton, they combined the study of

prophecy with chronology ; they united science with revelation. While they explored the firmament, they studied the Book of God ; and Jehovah met them in the high walks of their contemplation, and revealed to them His Son Jesus Christ. Had these men rejected revelation, they would never have had such a communication from God. Had they rejected miracles, they would have had no sign given to them in the heavens, nor would they have believed it if it had been. And had they rejected the mysterious, they would have rejected Christ because of His poverty and humiliation, and so would have rejected the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. But these wise men accepted both revelation and science. They combined reason with revelation. They studied truth in nature, and truth in the Old Testament ; and God guided them aright to the feet of Jesus.

How remarkable it is that two of the greatest lights in the heathen world, Socrates and Plato, were the most devout men of the age ; and how remarkable, too, in modern times, that Bacon, and Newton, and Locke, who made the most successful explorations in the realms of nature and of mind, bowed their mighty intellects to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and submitted to revelation. So it ought ever to be. Science shows us the works of God, and revelation shows us God Himself. It shows us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Again, this narrative presents us with THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE GENTILES. Seven hundred years before this event, Isaiah had foretold that a King should be born who should rule in righteousness, and in Him should the Gentiles trust. Here the King was born, fulfilling that prophecy ; here the Gentiles were bowing before Him and putting their trust in Him. Thus we have the firstfruits of the Gentiles ; but the firstfruits, you know, are the pledge of a coming harvest ; and the prophecies which announce the firstfruits tell us in glowing language of the glorious harvest. They tell us that all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and shall worship before Him. They tell us that Jesus shall have dominion from sea to sea, and that the whole earth shall be full of His glory. And as certainly as we have had the firstfruits we shall have the glorious harvest ; as certainly as Christ was born, Christ shall have universal empire ; and if

you look back, you see a good deal accomplished already. I ask you, Where are those ancient sanguinary deities, Ashtoreth, and Moloch, and Baal? They have vanished from the world. I ask, Where are Jupiter, Apollo, Juno, Mars, and Venus, these sanguinary deities of ancient Greece and Rome? They, too, have disappeared from our world, and their temples are demolished. Where are the hideous deities of the Scandinavians, of Germany, of Gaul, and of Britain, which our forefathers worshipped? They, too, have disappeared, and nothing remains but the legends of their former influence and power in these countries; and in these great events we have pledges of further triumphs. Where are Vishnu and Juggernaut? They are trembling on their thrones; and the day is fast approaching when they, like the other gods of the heathen, shall have passed away, and the whole earth shall be under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, mark, my text says that Christ is the King of the Jews—not only of the Gentiles, but of the Jews. It is very remarkable that when the Lord Jesus Christ was an infant in the cradle He was designated the King of the Jews; and when He hung a bleeding victim on the cross, His inscription was, “The King of the Jews.” There is a meaning in these facts; they are symbolical of the period, and glorious prophecies also, full of the assertion, that the day shall come when the weary-footed Jew shall find his way to the cross; when the sons of Abraham, so long benighted and enslaved by prejudice, who imbrued their hands in the Saviour’s innocent blood, shall acknowledge Him to be the true Messiah. They shall have the thick dark veil torn from their hearts; they shall believe in Him and love Him with a martyr’s ardour, and glorify Him with apostolic zeal. O blessed day, when Jew and Gentile shall worship at the feet of Jesus, and hail Him Lord of all! In that day the errors which have beclouded, and the superstitions which have corrupted the human heart shall pass away. The unbelief and the scepticism of the doubter and the infidel shall give place to a lively trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the human mind shall be expanded and exalted by the brightest truths of Christianity. Then human conduct shall exemplify Divine precepts, and human nature, arising from its degradation, shall stand erect, resplendent in the image, and rejoicing in the favour of Almighty God. The nations shall be truly

wise when they know the Saviour, and truly virtuous when they walk in His commands; and science shall rise to her highest altitude when entwined around the cross. Wealth shall attain its highest use when given to the Redeemer. Then this weary old world of ours shall at last find peace, and rest, and joy when it yields a grateful homage to the Saviour.

While the wise men were acknowledging Christ, the Jews themselves were rejecting Him. While the men who lived at a distance came to know Him, the men who lived on the very spot where He was born, and who had the prophecies in their hands, were the individuals who rejected Him, and who at last exclaimed, "Away with Him! Crucify Him! crucify Him!" Many shall come from the east and the west, and sit down in yon bright world with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. How will it be with you? You are more highly favoured than the Jews were. You have all the prophecies respecting Christ's great work accomplished. You have had Him brought to your very doors. You need not pursue a long pilgrimage from the east or from the west to find the Saviour, for He is here to-night, in your very midst. He is here, and He has come to save. Is there anyone here to-night who would see Jesus? You may see Him, know Him, and feel His love.

Come, then, to Him to-night. Sabbath School teachers, never reckon your work done until you bring the little ones to the feet of Jesus. There the soul finds rest, and peace, and joy, and happiness. Be it your constant aim to bring them there. Then you will be truly wise and truly happy. Children, give your hearts to Jesus now, for "this is the accepted time, and, behold, now is the day of salvation." And you, parents, come to the same blessed scene; come and behold the Saviour. We are trying to bring your little ones to Christ; come to Christ yourselves. Let not your children be a source of anguish to you in the great day of accounts. Let not your children be on the right hand alone, and you on the left. Let not bitter reflections lacerate your bosoms in the great solemn day of judgment! O, parents, think of your responsibilities, your duties, and endeavour by the grace of God to save yourselves and those whom God hath committed to your care! Come *now* to Jesus, and you shall be saved.

LONGING FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD.

A SERMON

*Preached at Victoria Chapel, St. John's Wood, on Sunday,
February 18, 1872.*

BY THE REV. G. T. PERKS, M.A.

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”—PSALM xxvii. 4.

THIS Psalm was written by the singer of Israel either during or immediately after a war engagement, perhaps shortly after the revolt of his rebellious son, or perhaps just after the battle with the Philistines, in which David was delivered out of the hands of the giant by Abishai, son of Zeruiah. It was on that occasion that he was entreated by his captains to withdraw from the scene of carnage and of peril, lest he should fall a victim to the revenge of his blood-thirsty pursuers, and so quench the light of Israel. But such was the calm and steadfast confidence of this godly man in the promises and the providence of God, that amidst the misery and desolation of war he sings, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.” This is not the language of a doubtful or timid spirit; it is singularly expressive of a calm and unfaltering reliance on the invariable faithfulness of Almighty God.

David glances at the spot endeared to his heart by many

sweet and refreshing memories. He had mingled with the solemn assemblies in singing his own beautiful songs; he had witnessed the manifestations of God's power and glory, and the recollection of such privileges filled him with strange and rapturous delight. Now no one can properly appreciate the value and influence of the worship of God unless he has, like David, been for a time deprived of it. He was now an exile from his beloved Zion, with all its ennobling solemnities; and although his arms were successful and his prospects were unclouded, yet nothing could prove to him a substitute for communion with the saints. He would "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple."

But we are inclined to give a more extensive application to the sentiment expressed in these words. The imminence of David's perils, the confusion of his foes, and the hindrances to his religious privileges, would serve to quicken the aspirations of his soul after the better world, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;" where the redeemed of God "shall see the King in His beauty, and the land which is very far off."

Looking, then, at the words of the text in this light, let me ask your attention to a few remarks—first, on the object of the Psalmist's desire; then, on his conduct with regard to that object; and thirdly, on the reasons or grounds of this desire; and may the Lord's Spirit guide and sanctify our meditations. Let us refer—

First, *To the object of the Psalmist's desire*, "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Now this desire is the healthful utterance of one of the deepest instincts of the human soul. The all-wise, all-powerful, all-gracious God is certainly entitled to the homage, obedience, and love of His creatures. He is so, not only on account of what He is, not only on account of the essential and absolute perfections of His glorious nature, but also on account of the relationships in which we stand to Him. He is our Creator and our Preserver. He is the Father of us all, "the Father of the spirits of all flesh." Adam during his normal innocence acknowledged God's claims upon him. One of our old English writers has beautifully referred to him as the high priest of nature, placed in this earth as in a magnificent temple, to offer up the incense

of praise and thanksgiving for the mute and insensible parts of the vast creation.

Now, David felt that God had claims upon him for this service. He saw that every object around him declared in its own peculiar way the glory of the Lord. Then, should he, a being endowed with a mind capable of knowing God, and with a heart capable of loving God—should he, a being whose life and whose reign had been crowned with so many signal mercies, providential and spiritual—should he withhold his humble tribute? No, this is the paramount desire of his very soul; and for this purpose he would “dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life.”

It was the house of the Lord for various reasons. Briefly, in the first place, because it was chosen by the Lord for His dwelling-place. “He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah,” where Mount Zion was, “the Mount Zion which He loved.” “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” It was so, again, because there the people assembled for His worship. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord.” It was so, yet further, because there the Lord made special manifestations of His presence. There, in the holy of holies, dwelt the Shekinah, the manifestation of Israel’s God. “I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.” Here, then, in the place which God had chosen for His worship, the place where His people assembled themselves, the place where He manifested His glory, David desired to dwell all the days of his life.

There seems to be an allusion here to the fact that this temporary tabernacle of Mount Zion, sometimes called “the pavilion,” and sometimes “the place of the curtains,” formed a part of David’s royal residence; or there may be a reference to the privilege of the priests, who always occupied some apartments under the very shadow of the tabernacle or temple; and such was David’s enlightened and impassioned attachment to the ordinances and services of God, that he would “dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life.” “How amiable,” says he, “are Thy tabernacles, O

Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." Such was David's love for God's house.

Now, the place in which we are assembled this morning is literally the house of the Lord; and respecting this house, some of you have felt with David a desire to dwell here all the days of your lives. But we wish rather to give a more evangelical turn to the sentiment of these words. That tabernacle on Mount Zion, as also the magnificent temple on Mount Moriah, was a type of Christ's Church—the spiritual, living Church of God; and of this Church we form part. We belong to this ineffable, this mystical, this unbroken body. There is but one body in Christ.

It is true that we have no magnificent temple to which our tribes must come up for worship at least three times a year. This is superseded by that living spiritual Church of which that old temple was a type. This building "fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." We have no Shekinah filling the holy of holies with its dazzling splendours. We have the real presence of the Lord Jesus, who is "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person," and who filleth with His real presence all in all. We have no cherubim of solid gold reflecting their rays into the holy places. We have the presence of those blessed angels, who are "all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who are about to inherit salvation;" and "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." We have no high priest to wait in his gorgeous vestments; but we have a High Priest, Jesus, the "great High Priest of our profession," who "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," who "has passed into the heavens," the great temple of the skies, and who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." We have no slaughtered victims to offer up in sacrifice; but, thanks be to God, we have a glorious and most efficacious provision, the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We have no altar of incense, sending up its grateful odours unceasingly to the skies; but we have what is vastly better, the

prayers and praises of the saints evermore going up "for a memorial before God." We have no golden candlestick with its ever-burning lights; but we have that ever-blessed Spirit of whom that golden candlestick with its perpetual light was a significant type; and we have these lively oracles given by the inspiration of that Divine Spirit, which are ever making us "wise unto salvation," and which are "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path."

It is for reasons such as these that St. Paul, carrying forward everything vital and spiritual in the waning dispensation, embodies all in this most glorious language addressed to the Hebrews, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Oh! yes, God is here, Jesus is here, the Holy Ghost is here, angels are here, the glorified spirits of the redeemed are here, and we may well exclaim, as did the patriarch of old, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

It is a glorious privilege to have part in this goodly fellowship; to feel, amid the vicissitudes and tribulations of our mortal pilgrimage, that one is our Father, even God; that one is our Saviour, even Jesus; that one is our Comforter, even the Holy Ghost; that one place is our home, the eternal mansions of the skies. David says, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight."

But the Church on earth is, after all, only a very faint and feeble type of the Church triumphant in the skies; of the unmixed society, of the uninterrupted worship, of the never-ending enjoyments pertaining to the Church in heaven. The deep, strong, and irrepressible panting which the saints feel for that endless blessedness is perhaps the strongest evidence that we can have for the immortality of man. I, for one, would not give a straw for all the metaphysical arguments in proof of the immortality of the soul. I believe this never can be proved by such arguments. We have something better

than logic in the deepest and most indestructible instincts of our spiritual and moral nature. I *feel* that I am immortal, and *that* is the reason why I believe it; and Christ, who knew what was in man, speaks to the deepest feelings of our nature when He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Where Christ is, we shall follow; what Christ is, we shall become; and in yonder land, which is afar off, we shall see the King in His beauty; and then every desire of the soul shall be satisfied, and God shall be all and in all. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

Now, secondly, let me refer briefly to *David's conduct with regard to the object of his desire*. He says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." This desire, therefore, was not the mere outcome of temporary excitement, of evanescent feeling. It was something that had taken hold of the deepest affections of his moral nature; and it speedily consolidated into something practical, definite, and useful.

Let us note, then, in the first place, that his conduct is marked by great concentration of purpose. He says, "*One thing* have I desired of the Lord." If he had divided his purpose, so to speak, between the wealth and honours and pleasures of this life, and the claims of religion, he would have made but little progress towards the realisation of the objects of his desire. But listen to the beautiful language in which he embodies and expresses the singleness and the supremacy of this great master purpose. He says, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." And again he says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." And the result of this he describes when representing the character of the godly man in the first Psalm. He says, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." This element of character exhibited by David is a most valuable one. I should like to impress this upon my young friends especially.

Nothing can ever be accomplished in learning, or in science, or in trade, or in commerce, or in any walk of life, without this concentration of purpose. On the other side there is scarcely anything that cannot be accomplished by a man in this world in whom this element of character has a marked, habitual, unquestionable ascendancy. Our Lord Himself refers to this in a beautiful and very significant passage. He says, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." He commends this, further, in the character of Mary. He says, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." This was the secret of St. Paul's steadfastness and triumphs. He says, "This *one* thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." His epistles and his discourses, his travels and his voyages, his shipwrecks and his sufferings, under the harmonising force of this grand master-purpose, were all made to converge to one point, and to contribute to one result—his steady progress in usefulness, and in the knowledge and the love of God. James refers to the same element of character in very striking language. He says, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways;" by which he means that a man who has duplicate souls, one soul for heaven and another soul for earth, has no clearly defined views. He has no carefully matured plans. Unstable as water, he can never, never excel. Now, would you consecrate to the claims and duties of religion this concentration of purpose of which we are speaking this morning, you must be fully persuaded in your own minds. Religion must not be with you a doubtful, questionable, and unsettled thing; but you must be fully persuaded in your own minds about its solemn reality. Your hearts must be established in grace. You must receive within you the kingdom which may not be moved. You must emulate the example of Him of whom it

is said, that He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Nay, more, you must bear the image of that great God who is called "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Then, again, David's conduct was marked by prayerful earnestness. He says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord." And what is prayer but earnest desire? It is desire addressed to God in the name of Jesus, by the help of the Spirit, for every blessing which we need, and which God has promised; and there is no exercise in which we are more impressed with our own nothingness and with the greatness of God. There is no other exercise in which this world sinks into more utter insignificance, and the eternal world rises into more awful and overwhelming grandeur. David was a man of prayer. He says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." "Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments." When he was bowed down by personal affliction, or by domestic trial, or national disaster, he then betook himself to prayer, and poured forth those touching supplications which have so enriched the literature of the Church in all ages. Surely nothing great or good was ever accomplished in man or by man without prayer, without much prayer. This duty is enforced upon us by reiterated precepts. It is commended to us by the most stimulating examples, and especially by the example of the Man Christ Jesus, who was much given to prayer. Sometimes He retired from the multitude to His favourite Gethsemane; sometimes He rose up a great while before the day to pray; and sometimes He spent the whole night in prayer to God; and if we call ourselves followers of Christ we must imitate His example in respect of earnest prayer. Would you dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of your life? You must pray without ceasing and without doubting. If you would maintain an abiding evidence of God's favour amid all the conflicts and sorrows of your earthly pilgrimage; if you would daily triumph over self and over sin; if you would grow in conformity to God's image and in meekness for God's presence, you must pray more. In the retirement of your closets, at your family altars, in your social gatherings, in your solemn assemblies, you must pray without ceasing. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that

love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

And, again, his conduct was marked by zealous perseverance. He says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." The desire relates to the past, the seeking relates to the future; and this strong combination of different tenses is intended to suggest to us this fact, that the one thing was to cover the whole of his lifetime. It was to be the very alpha and omega of his existence. It is not enough to begin well. We must end well. "He that endureth *to the end*, the same shall be saved." "Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." This word "seek" is very emphatic and very significant. It indicates the unslumbering vigilance, the unflagging assiduity with which David addressed himself to the duties and claims of religion. Now weigh for a moment some of his own expressions as to these matters. He says in reference to the Sabbath, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." He says in reference to the public worship of God, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." He says in reference to the worship itself, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." "Let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation." It was with these feelings of holy satisfaction, of rapturous delight, of eager desire, that David addressed himself to the claims and duties of religion; and the benefit of all this is pointed out in his own description of the godly man. He says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted"—beautiful expression—"in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Now, would you dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of your life, you must imitate this zealous perseverance of David. You must remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You must not "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;" and you must worship that God who is a Spirit, "in spirit and in truth." There is, indeed, very great danger in these times lest we should allow our-

selves to be robbed of the spiritualising and refreshing influence of the solemnities of public worship by permitting them to degenerate into the mere routine of a cold and lifeless religious externalism. We want to learn and practise the maxim that the soul of religion is the religion of the soul. We want to understand more fully the profound meaning of the words, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Now, very briefly, a few remarks upon *the reasons or grounds of David's desire*. "That I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in His temple." Although he lived under a dispensation which was characterised by the magnificence of its temple, by the pomp of its priesthood, by the imposing aspect of its ceremonial, and by the frequency of its services and festivals, he felt that nothing earthly could satisfy the deep longings of his heart. He felt that there was something within him that panted after fellowship with a kindred nature, and after communion with God Himself; and hence the desire which he cherished was for two reasons, "that he might behold the beauty of the Lord," and "that he might inquire in His temple."

Now, let us endeavour briefly to illustrate these two points:—First, that he might behold the beauty of the Lord. Now, the beauty of the Lord is the glory of the Lord, as it is seen in the harmony, and adjustment, and beauty of His works; in the watchful care and boundless benefactions of His providence; but more especially in the provisions of His grace. David had gazed upon the glories of his native Hebron. He had sung of the tempest and the storm in his own matchless Psalms. He had had some experience of God's special providential care; but yet he longed to behold the beauty of the Lord as it was to be seen in the temple, and to be seen in connection with the services of the tabernacle. The spirituality of David comes out in many Psalms, and especially in his Messianic compositions. "David in spirit called Christ Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." By an enlightened and far-reaching faith, he was able to look forward through promises and prophecies and types to that infant Jesus, who was to be the Redeemer and Saviour of man; and it was that Jesus whom David in spirit called his Lord.

My dear friends, if we would see the beauty of the Lord we must cultivate that spirituality of mind, that inner vision, that inner discernment, which David so largely possessed. Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, speaks of the times of the Messiah, and says, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Oh! but there is beauty in Jesus, only we cannot see it for the lack of that spiritual discernment which David possessed.

Then, the second reason which David assigns is, that he might "inquire in the temple." The human mind may be cultured by discipline, and may be enriched with knowledge; but it will always need to make further inquiries. There will always be glories in the Divine nature, and facts in the Divine government, and depths in the Divine life, after which we shall be inquiring and inquiring for ever. And these inquiries should certainly be made in the temple. "I have sought Thee," says the founder of Inductive Philosophy, "in the garden, and in the schools and hills; but I have only found Thee in Thy great temple." Let us inquire in the temple. This is an age of inquiry; and we cannot inquire too much about the works of God. The glories of the heavens, the wonders of the earth and of the mighty deep, are great; but there are no questions so worthy of our inquiries as those which relate to God, to ourselves, to redemption, and to immortality; and these are inquiries which may be put in the temple. If any of you are in doubt this morning, inquire. Some of you, perhaps, have tried the world in its treacherous friendships and its uncertain riches; and, stung by the memory of many a bitter disappointment, and conscious of an aching desolateness within, which nothing earthly can satisfy, you are saying, "Who will show me any good?" Or, perhaps, some of you have seen yourselves in the mirror of the law, and startled by the hideous deformity of your character, and groaning under the accumulated burden of your sins, you are saying, "What must I do to be saved?" Or, perhaps, some of you have been contending with the ills and sorrows of human life, and are saying, "Why doth His chariot so long delay? why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" Oh! if these are your inquiries, if they come forth from honest and sincere hearts, then there are answers to these inquiries in the Word of God. Listen to them this

morning. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk without money and without price. And let your soul delight itself in fatness." And if you are pricked in your hearts, and if you are saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus," we point you once more to the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

And what shall I say to the timid and sorrowful disciples of Jesus? Once again, let me remind you of those precious words which some of the Puritans used to call "Christ's infallible cure for all heart trouble;" and if you will try it for yourselves, you will find an unfailing specific. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions."

Now, these are the three faiths—faith in God, who permits your trouble; faith in Christ, who can redeem you out of all your trouble; and faith in immortality, which will more than recompense you for patient endurance of all your troubles. With these three faiths firmly established within you, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions."

We can hardly suppose that there is anyone present this morning indulging in the sceptical spirit of the man of old, who said to the faithful prophet, "Watchman, what of the night?" But if there should be such a one, our answer is just the answer of the prophet: "Behold, the morning cometh, and also the night. If ye will inquire, inquire ye." At present it is day with you, and you may put your inquiries, and those inquiries may be met; but the night cometh when you will put your inquiries in vain, and you will have to cry out with bitter lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." If your inquiries are honest and sincere, inquire ye, return, come. This is our last word this morning, as it is almost the last word found in the lively oracles of grace, and in the message from heaven that lingers upon the ears of a dying world: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

May the Lord bless His word for His own name's sake!

WALKING WITH GOD.

A SERMON

*Preached at the Twentieth Street Methodist Episcopal Church,
Philadelphia.*

By BISHOP SIMPSON.

“And Enoch walked with God.”—GENESIS v. 24.

HOW wonderfully God has constituted us that we may be able to receive lessons from the past! He hath given us memory, and how wonderful in its power—in its nature! What images of the past crowd upon our mind!—the scenes of childhood, the associations of youth, the doings of riper years; what we have read of heroes, of philosophers, and of statesmen; what we have seen or heard of the scenery of this great world. What pictures gather around the hall of memory—picture upon picture; and yet each perfect, permanent, distinct! How greatly the mind, in this respect, rises above all other instrumentalities around us! The telescope has a wide range: it brings the distant near. We look at the sun, or moon, or stars. We turn the glass to distant mountain-tops, and behold what the naked eye could not see; but no image remains on the telescope. Each new object fills the entire vision, and there is no trace of the past, no image left. The daguerreotype gives us comfort in preserving the images of our friends, and it is a great triumph of art to be able to fix upon the plate the features of those we love, and the beauties of the landscape that may charm us; but that plate once occupied, there is *no room for another picture*. The first must be effaced before the second can be made. But in these minds of ours, image upon image is multiplied daily and hourly. Thoughts are treasured; pictures are arranged. From infancy to old age, the treasures are accumulating, and

yet the mind never grows weary, the power to receive the impressions is never exhausted; and so far from the mind ever being full, the more treasures there are accumulated and the more images there are pictured in its halls, the more room there is for others, and each seems to invite a train of associates to come and gather around it. Such is memory.

And then God aids not only by having given us this memory to preserve these pictures, but by giving us the power of speech and the power of hearing, that we may not only have these pictures which our own senses furnish, but may tell to others what we have seen; and a thousand eyes look for us, and a thousand ears hear for us, and a thousand hands gather for us. The world is made tributary to us. The ends of the earth pour forth their treasures, and the ages of the past, as well as the age in which we live, rise to speak to us; and around us gather the worthies of thousands of years, and they come and stand before us, speaking in our ears; and their lives come before us as models of wisdom, of virtue, of holiness, and of triumph. The world is full of these models. The man of science reads the past, and is stimulated; and the man of history listens to the voices that ring down the centuries; and the poet listens to those "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," and his heart is charmed, and he utters his notes more sweetly for the voices which his ears have heard, and which his heart has seemed to gather up, and by which his soul is entranced. So, too, with the man of business. He reads of success, and of skill, and of knowledge, and of triumph; and, taking lessons of the past, he is made the more successful business-man of the present.

But it is for our moral training that these lessons are given us specially from the great past; and to-day, from the very birth of creation, comes before us the character of him of whom we have read; and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, rises up, as from his scenes on earth, or points down, as from his home in glory, that we may look at his character, listen to his voice, and take courage by his deeds.

And what a lesson does Enoch give us this morning! He "walked with God." But can a man walk with God? We know it is delightful to walk with a friend. Who has not, at the summer evening hour, while the shadows have been gathering gently, taken the arm of a friend and walked in sweet converse, and scarcely marked the moments as they

fled? Who has not leaned upon a strong arm when passing through places of danger? And who has not had a guide, at some period of life, to direct him amidst places where, unguided, he might have fallen? It would be a great thing to have it to say that we had walked arm in arm with Alexander, or Napoleon, or some of the great men of earth. It would be greater still if we could say we had walked with angels; if they had come to sit with us, as they did with Abraham, and to talk; if they had come to visit us, as they did Manoah; if they had come to wait upon us, as they did upon the Saviour when they gathered round the Bethlehem to which He came, or the garden in which He suffered, or the cross on which He hung, or the tomb in which He lay, or when they waited over the top of Mount Olivet that they might greet Him home to heaven, and cry out: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Oh! it would have been a great thing, when Jesus was upon earth, to have walked beside Him! I should like to have gone with Him as He went through the grain-fields, and plucked the ears of corn, and did eat; to have sat down with Him at the well of Samaria, and waited while He had water to drink; to have been by His side when He stopped by yon city-gate to heal a blind man; and, oh! how I would like to have seen the light sparkle for the first time in the eyes of that blind man, and to have beheld the rapture that thrilled his soul when he looked out upon the earth! How I should like to have been with Him when, at the grave of Lazarus, He uttered those words, "Lazarus, come forth;" and the dead man came to life!

And as glorious as that is our privilege, for a man may walk with God. Enoch walked with God. Nor was that walk for a moment merely. We might fancy, possibly, that he walked with God a few moments before his death, or on some hallowed occasion, but the Scripture seems to teach us that it was the habit of his life to walk with God. His life was no short one, for he lived three hundred and sixty-five years; and he walked with God, and was not, for God took him. How much he must have enjoyed when he walked with God!

But it may be asked, "Can one walk with God amid the busy associations of life?" Enoch was not alone. A family grew around him. He had sons and daughters; for it is said

he was a father. In the cares of his family, in the discharge of his duties, he had the same human heart, the same passions, the same temptations, the same trials, the same conflicts that we have, and yet he walked with God. And if a man can walk with God, ought not we? But how is this brought about?

In the first place, the word Enoch in the original signifies to be trained, to be educated or instructed. It is precisely the same word that is used in the passage, "Train up a child in the way he should go;" and Enoch's name was probably given him from the care with which he was trained. He was trained well. He received instruction with an honest heart. At the basis of all success in life lie knowledge, education, training. If a man attempts to be a merchant, he must have an education for it, must be trained for it. If a man is to be a manufacturer, he must be trained for it. If a man is to be a mechanic, he must learn his art. If he is to be a professional man, he must have a preparation for it. And so if we would walk in life's pathway successfully, and triumph over difficulties, we must be educated or trained for it. We must learn our nature. "Know thyself" lies at the foundation of great success. A man must study himself; and no man can succeed who does not examine thoroughly his own temperament and disposition. No man can live for me, and it would be very unsafe for me to take any human being for my absolute pattern. God has given me an individuality, and there are some things in which I am unlike any other individual who ever lived, or ever will live; and that I may know how such a being can be trained, how managed and succeed best, I must study myself, my nature, my weaknesses, my defects, my peculiar liabilities to go wrong, the weak points at which I may be assailed. No one may be aware of them but myself and God. But if ever I succeed, I must understand them, and I must say, "At that point I must place a double guard. That impulse, if strengthened or cultivated, will lead me wrong. I must keep out of circumstances that would excite it. I must know myself, must train myself."

Now, is it not so everywhere? Why, some of you are good singers. It is not simply because God gave you the voice that you can execute that piece of music: you made an effort, and now can rise from that low note so easily, by a single bound, to the high note that your voice at first could not strike. And then how you can reach that falsetto! now

throw your voice on that minor key, when once you could not do it! And it is by training the voice, by using the power God gives you. When you commenced writing, you remember what fearful strokes you made, no shape scarcely in the letters you formed; but you continued to practice, until now, with scarcely thinking, the pen seems of itself almost to move and form the letters. You sat down at the instrument, some of you, and with great difficulty could make your fingers touch this key or that; but now your fingers seemingly of themselves make the music. It is done by training. So to attain moral excellence there must be moral training. Many persons wonder why they have not made that attainment as Christians which others have made. They have never tried; have not given themselves to this training which lies at the foundation of true moral excellence.

But critics tell us the expression "walked with God" here has a peculiar signification. It signifies, set himself purposely to walk with God; determined to walk with God; indicating, as the next lesson, decision, purpose. Having been instructed that it was his duty to walk with God, having understood how he might walk with God, he set himself to walk with God. It was his firm purpose. There are many who have indefinite wishes; they intend to be better than they have been, and yet have no fixed purpose or decision of character. To-day they determine to be better, and to-morrow yield to temptation; to-day they are in the house of God, and they resolve that they will be Christians, and to-morrow, going out into company, they fall into every evil way, they are led captive by the enemy at his will. And why? They have no firmness of character, no decision of purpose; they have not said to themselves: "I will conquer my besetments; I will triumph, no matter what difficulties be in my way." Now, we ought to determine what is right, and then to go forward at all hazards. Are you a father—the head of a family? You are to say: "Others may do as they will; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." No matter whether there be an altar of prayer in any other family on the face of the earth, you are to set up an altar, to gather your family around it. Oh! how sweet to offer your incense and let it rise with fragrance, were there no other altar on this earth! That is decision of character. Are you a young man, and have you wicked associates? Then you are to say:

"God helping me, I will be a Christian. Others may be profane, the oath shall never pass my lips; others may be fraudulent, the wrong shall never be done by me; others may waste their moments, I will redeem the time, because it is precious; others may trifle away their energies, I am born for something higher; I am travelling to a holier land. Company I love on earth, but oh! the company of the redeemed, of the blood-washed, of angels, and of God, is higher than these companionships of earth! I will seek that." Are you a young lady, walking in the beauty of youth and loveliness? It is lovelier to be a Christian than to be any other character on the face of earth; to be at the foot of the cross, drawing from that cross its fragrance and power, looking up to heaven and having companionship with the Beloved, and having purity and love and beauty and heaven all around you. And this decision of character, this firm purpose that you will walk with God, that you will set yourself to this, no matter what may come, is the second step in the furnishing of true character. If you can be drawn aside, there are many who will draw you aside. If you may be tempted, there are tempters all around you. Only in perfect firmness and decision is there any safety whatever.

But I fancy I hear some one saying, "While this is so, the enemy throws such a pressure of the world around, such a perpetual accumulation of cares and anxieties, that it is impossible for us to walk with God; we forget the eternal, the invisible, the spiritual." And, think you, had not Enoch the same cares, and anxieties, and pressure, that you have? But he overcame by faith. And what is that faith? It is "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." In the midst of a wicked world, he thought of that which lay beyond the visible. God had not come visibly by his side, but he knew He was there. The angels were not revealed in their garments of light, and yet he knew they were there. And heaven, with its glories, was not visible to the eye, but he knew it was there; and he lived as though he saw it; he lived as seeing Him who is invisible. And we know the invisible. It is around us; it is above us; it is as near us as it was to him; and if faith, bringing this near, counteracted the pressure of this world with him, so it may with us. This realization of the unseen is that which gives perfect triumph. It brings us to Gethsemane and Calvary;

it teaches us to lean on the Saviour's arms; makes the world flame with light; takes away the veil from futurity, and we see the cloud of witnesses gather all around us.

Another element in his character was, he spent his life in doing good. He was "a preacher of righteousness." From what it is said by the Apostle Jude, he was living in a very wicked world; and he was endeavouring to correct its wickedness, and very possibly he had no ordinary trials in attempting so to do. Jude says, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these," that is, preached to them, the ungodly, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." The repetition of "ungodly" signifies intensity, the great amount of ungodliness. In the midst of a wicked world, Enoch's work was to make that world better; and the more wicked the world, the more need of working.

Now, these are the lessons which Enoch's example teaches us. It is very possible that Enoch may have been threatened with death because of what he did. Milton gives this picture, and he draws him very beautifully when he shows the earth was growing worse and worse. "Then there arose one of form and countenance sedate." After describing him as preaching to men, he adds: "A cloud from heaven came down and took him from their sight." This is but a fancy, but it is a pleasant fancy; and there seems to be an air of plausibility around it. The world was going down to ruin; Enoch dared to preach, and to point to a coming judgment; and as he unfolded this coming judgment, and portrayed their danger and doom, they gathered against him as they gathered against Stephen, gnashed upon him with their teeth, and said: "Away with him! away with him!" and just then I fancy I see the cloud gather around Enoch: and while men seek his life, God let down the chariot and told Enoch to step in; and with angels attending him he ascends to heaven. This was not for himself alone, but to show the presence and power of God. It would have been a little matter to live a few years longer and then lie down on a dying-bed and sweetly pass away. It was necessary to give man a proof that there is an invisible world all around; that there is a vast eternity

before man, and that here he is every moment under the care and government of God. And in a few ages of the world God has thus appeared.

But now let us see whether there may be this walking with God on our part. I have noticed the instructions of Enoch. Have we such facilities of instruction as he had? Now, there are some that he had which we cannot have. I have sometimes fancied I saw him when a boy. Adam had not yet left the earth; he was a little over six hundred years old when Enoch was born, and lived more than three hundred years after. I have thought that very probably the aged Adam used to take little Enoch by the hand and walk with him. Enoch was anxious to learn, and when a child is anxious to learn and listen, age loves to talk with childhood; and what lessons did Adam give! Methinks he told him how the earth looked when he first opened his eyes; of Eden, in all its glory; how the heavens beamed in brightness, and the flowers sent forth their sweet perfume; how the birds sang beautiful melodies, and the angels came down to walk in the garden, and God Himself was there. Methinks he told Enoch the whole story—how God gave him Eve, and her beauty and loveliness; then of the fall, and his sorrow, and his turning away from Eden, and the Cherubim that guarded the gate that man might never enter there; and then the promise of a Saviour; and then about Abel and Cain. And what a host of questions would young Enoch ask! Then, too, all the inventors of earth were there, and Enoch could talk with them. Yet how much greater are our opportunities! Had he the story of the creation and of the fall? We have it. Had he a knowledge of science and its conquests? We have all he had, and for six thousand years the world has been moving on in its triumph of mind over matter; materials have been gathered, and we can learn as Enoch never could, because there are materials on which he could not lay his hand. Did angels walk on earth? We have the record. Did he trust in a Saviour to come? The Saviour has come. Enoch knew nothing of the Babe of Bethlehem. His eye had not gazed on the star seen in the East as ours can. He had not gone with the wise men with his gifts to the infant Jesus as we can go. He had no story of Gethsemane, and the fearful struggle, and the victory. He had no story of Calvary. He had not heard the voice saying: "It is

finished!" There been no ascension from Olivet, no preaching Jesus through the world until empires gave way and thrones crumbled and false systems vanished; and yet, standing where we do, we have the lessons Enoch had, the lessons Moses had; we have listened to the thoughts that made a David tune his harp, have had visions that fired the imagination of Ezekiel and Daniel, have had the teaching of Jesus when on earth, and oh! the songs that have been rolling, that angels started from heaven, rolling on to fill this world! Had he instruction? We have much more. And if because he was instructed he was able to walk with God, we stand on higher ground and ought to be able to walk with God.

We may not have that same firmness of purpose he had; and I fear many of us fail just here. How often you have been turned aside! how frequently have we erred! what sad mistakes have we made, and how often have we lost our firmness of purpose! It seems to me there is a ladder, like that which Jacob saw set up from earth to heaven, and while Enoch would have been away up yonder on those higher rounds, almost ready to pass into the invisible, we linger yet on the lower rounds of the ladder, not having ascended, having travelled a little step up and then a step down; and there are some of us, I am afraid, to-day, no higher in our ascent toward glory than we were twenty years ago.

My dear brother, to-day, in the sight of God, are you more like Jesus than you were twenty years ago? Have you more of the enjoyments of religion? What have you been living for? God has graciously spared you, and given you HIS word and Spirit and all needful helps, and yet no better all the twenty years! Oh, how sad it is for us! If we keep on in this way, oh, what is the prospect before us?

But there are others, who, I trust, have been gaining. You look back to your early experience, and it is sweeter now to pray than then; heaven is more attractive now than then; Jesus is nearer now than then; it is easier to lean on His arm; it is more delightful to think of death, and triumph, and glory. The angels seem to be lovelier; the friends who have left us seem nearer. Sometimes the veil seems to grow so thin that the whole family in heaven and earth seem to surround us. If such is the case, you are ripening for glory—walking, to some extent, with God.

But then, in this walking now, how are we succeeding? We may never know, in the sense of visible knowledge, that we walk with God; and yet there does come the Divine assurance to the heart, the conviction that God is with us. And how unlike earthly company is this walking with God. Usually we love to go to the house of friends when everything is cheerful; and if we meet a friend on the street, we love to walk with him if he is in good spirits; but when he is sad, and clouds gather around him, and he is in distress, and all forsake him, how prone are we to keep away from him. But the peculiarity of this privilege of walking with God is that just in such ways we seem to have the greatest opportunities of walking with God. Is a man in trouble? It seems to afford our blessed Saviour, if I may use the phrase, a kind of delight just to draw near when the shadows gather, to touch our arm, and say, "I am with you." Do deep waters of adversity rise around us, and are we likely to be submerged? How sweetly the voice sounds from heaven: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the waves they shall not overwhelm thee. I will be with thee, and the flames shall not have power over thee." Oh, how sweet in hours of danger, and sadness, and gloom, that Jesus can come near! When friends forsake, when old age approaches, and affliction comes, then the voice sounds from heaven, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And, as we sometimes sing:—

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
He'll never, no never forsake to its foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake."

How sweet the promise! Jesus walks with us in time of calamity, in time of danger, in time of sorrow, in time of sickness. Oh! He is with us on a dying-bed, there to put in our hands His rod and His staff; there when the eye grows dim to touch it by His heavenly omnipotence, and open it to look to the land that is afar off, and that we may see the King in His beauty.

We may walk with God. Have you tried it? Oh! have you ever, when walking on the street all alone, or in deep affliction, felt in your heart there was One with you? Christ never forsakes His followers. It was necessary, for the purpose of showing the sufferings of Christ for us, that there should be the moment of gloom to Him on the cross; but

when the follower of Jesus comes to die, he looks up and sees Jesus at the right hand of God. He is with us, and we may walk with Him.

But if we are to walk with God, there are a few things requisite. In the first place, we must go nowhere that Christ will not go. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." Christ is not there. "Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Christ is not there. "Nor standeth in the way of sinners." Christ is not there. If you would walk with Christ, keep out of all evil company—from every place where you cannot go in the Spirit of Christ. If you go out of the territory where He would go, you need not expect to find Him.

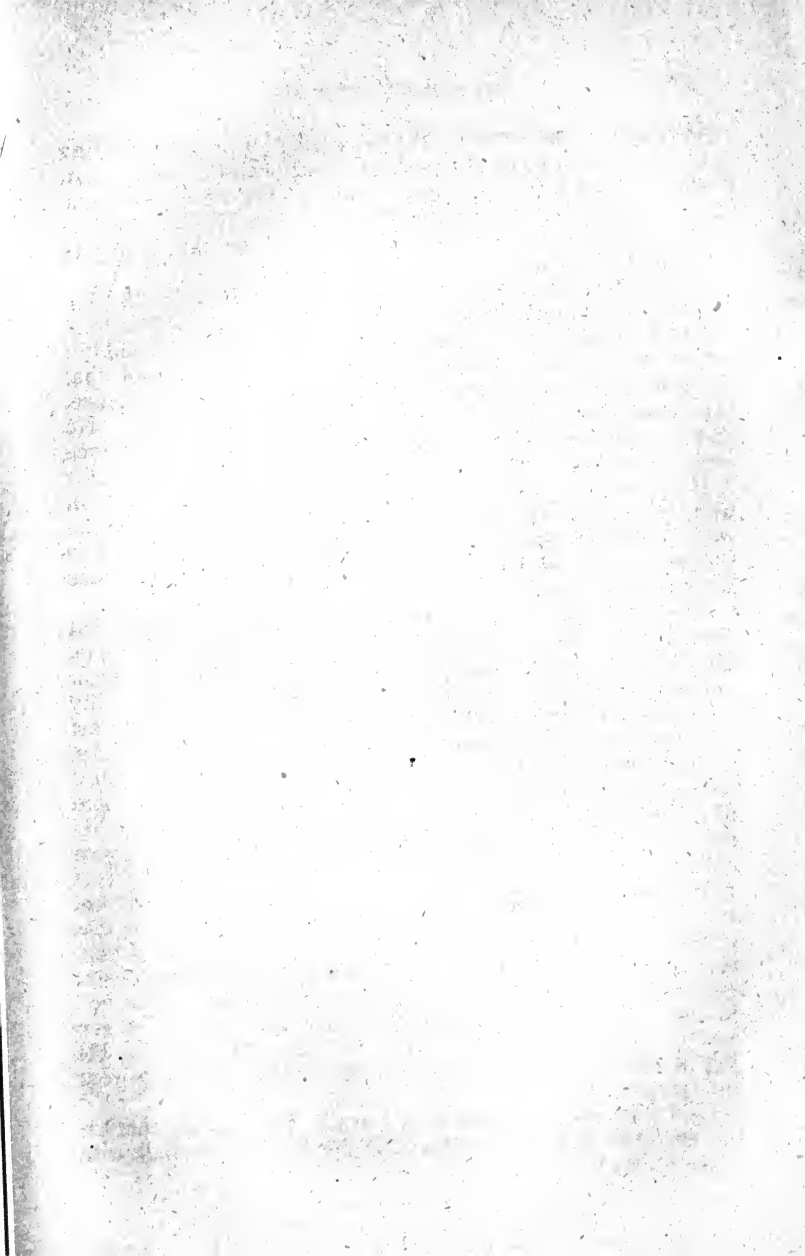
And yet I do not say you must not go among wicked people; Christ went among them. If you go for the purpose of doing them good, you may go to the very edge of the pit of darkness to rescue men, and you are perfectly safe; for Jesus says: "Lo, I am with you alway." But if you go for pleasure and amusement, then you are forsaking Christ, and a cloud will gather around your vision. If you walk with Christ, you must have no conversation that is unbecoming the Gospel. Let no unholy word proceed out of your mouth; it would grieve Him. Young man, when you are sitting beside your mother, there are a great many things you would not say which you do sometimes say in company. Shun all such conversation. Remember Jesus is near—the character of purity, and truth, and love, and holiness; and, if you would walk with Jesus, let your lips be guarded, and your words be cared for. If you would walk with Jesus, be careful of your spirit. If you hate anyone, the love of God cannot be in you. Christ does not reveal His presence to a soul that does not love. But you may say: "The man has done wrong." That may be true, but yet you ought to love him—not for his wrongdoing, but to do him good. You may say: "That man has treated me badly; I will never speak to him." Yes, and while you retain that spirit Christ will never speak to you. Did that man offend you? Never as you have offended Christ. You can't pray for forgiveness unless you forgive. And unless you have the spirit of love in your heart, you may try to be a Christian, but you are not like Christ, and you are not with Christ, and will never feel the glowing emotions of love in your heart. If you walk with Christ, you must be like Him;

your spirit must partake of the heavenly ; you must be willing to forgive ; and you must be kind, and prayerful, and earnest, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Oh ! there is sunshine for the soul : it is found under the cross ! Oh ! there is communion with God : it is found by being like Him and walking with Him.

But you may ask, possibly : " Suppose we walk with God from early youth, can we be translated that we shall not see death ? Some have thought so, but there is no ground for such an opinion. Translations were to be a proof that heaven was near. Enoch lived in an age of material science. The earth was full of inventors ; and men were saying, " No God." When Enoch prophesied that the Lord would come with ten thousand of His saints to take vengeance, they said : " It is not so." And just then God let down His chariot, and let them see there was an invisible world. And so in the day of Elijah. But it is not necessary for us now. There is a heaven, and we know it ; and it makes very little difference how we close our eyes.

And now, my dear friends, oh ! how my soul yearns that some of you may begin a higher life to-day. Young people, aim at this walking with God. Christians of age, you know something of the sweetness of it ; cultivate it more. My heart has often burned within me when I have thought of the last view we have of Jesus, walking among the golden candlesticks, taking care of the churches. He is in the churches, and if you want to walk with Jesus, walk in the churches ; take care of them ; do all you can for them ; labour for their good ; try to save souls. Mothers, set about it to-day ; teach your children more of Jesus. Fathers, set about it to-day ; let your sons see you are more like Jesus. Men of position, consecrate yourselves to Christ, and let the world see that you are living as seeing Him who is invisible. All of you, gather around the Church, for Jesus has said : " The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is on a rock. And oh ! to-day, as you go home, may you walk with Jesus ! When you go to your homes, may you find Him there ! May He impart bliss to all your domestic life ! May he elevate your thoughts !

Oh ! how sweet to walk with Jesus ! If you knew that to-day would be your last day on earth, how would you walk with Jesus to-day !





REV. CHARLES GARRETT.

ZEAL FOR GOOD WORKS.

A SERMON

*Preached in the New Wesleyan Chapel, Westminster, on
Thursday, April 18, 1872.*

BY THE REV. CHARLES GARRETT.

“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—
TITUS ii. 14.

THOSE of you who have read that capital little book, “Ministering Children,” will recollect the scene with “Old Willie.” You remember Willie was sitting at his cottage door, as he had done many a time, watching the shadows as they went stealing along, when a young girl came up to him and asked him if he didn’t find the days very long and wearisome, sitting there and doing nothing. And the old man replied, “My doing days are over.” “Well, then,” said the child, “why not read? why not read the Bible? why not read the story of your Saviour’s life?” And the old man said that he didn’t know how to read; he often wished that he did. The girl asked him, Had he never learned? “Yes, a little;” but he had forgotten the little he had learned. “Well, then,” said she, with the eager hopefulness of youth, “why don’t you learn?” The old man said his learning days were about over, and that it was hardly worth trying. “Oh yes,” she said, “you can easily learn, if you try.” Would he try if she would teach him? Well, catching a little of the enthusiasm of his companion, he said he was willing to try, if she was willing to take the trouble to be his teacher. And accordingly the plan was acted upon. You recollect she brought her Bible, sat down by him, and said, “Now, we will

have our first lesson," trying to awaken what memories he might have of the learning of bygone days by pointing to the letter *J*. He found out that he knew that; and they went on to *e*, and then to *s*, and *u*, and *s*, till he could spell the word. "There," said the child, "you see that is the name of your blessed Saviour, Jesus." And the old man, as pleased as his teacher was to have got on so rapidly, went over and over again with the word "Jesus, Jesus." "Now," said the little girl, "I shall leave you, and you can look at your first lesson, and you can see in how many places you can find this beautiful word." And the old man went on eagerly with his lesson down column after column, and found the word here, and found it there, and found it yonder; and he made little marks that he might show his teacher how clever he was. Here was Jesus, and there was Jesus, and he quite longed for her to come that she might see how industrious he had been. The old man goes on, you recollect, to say that by-and-by he could read pretty well; "but," said he, "I never forgot my first lesson, and," said he afterwards, "whenever I came to the Bible I seemed to be always looking for Jesus."

Well, now, I ask you, is not that just true, or ought it not, at all events, to be true of those who gather in God's house, as well as those who gather around God's Word? Ought we not ever to be looking for Jesus? Ought we not to be dissatisfied if we meet with everybody else and do not meet with Jesus? Ought not our language to be, when we are come here, that old language, "We would see Jesus." And it is only in proportion as Christ is put forth before the people that they will be moved, and that the soul will be brought out of darkness into that light which God designs it to enjoy. I know that this Book is constructed upon this very principle, that Christ should be in the forefront. Somebody has said, and very well said, that there is not a town in England in which there is not a road to London; and so there is not a passage in the Bible from which there is not a road to Calvary. Sometimes, however, there is a difficulty in finding out the road. You seem to have to go by a very circuitous path to get to Calvary. There are passages, however, that read so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein; and it seems to me that my text to-night is one of these. You and I see that Christ is in the very forefront of it. I was going to say, I should like to hear

a man preach from my text and leave Jesus out. Jesus is in the front, in the middle, and at the end; and you have thus in these few words Christ, His work, and His design in doing that work; and if there is a poor sinner come in here to-night, I tell him he has but to get my text into his head, and through God's grace get it down into his heart; and though he were standing on the very mouth of hell, it would lift him up to the very throne of God. God grant it may be so with some to-night!

First, then, let us look at HIM OF WHOM MY TEXT SPEAKS—THE PERSON. You will see that everything depends on this. You and I know that our views of any act will depend very much upon our views of the actor; that, for instance, some act performed by two persons occupying different positions in life, or having different relationships, will have altogether a different influence upon us, and a different aspect to us. It would be easy to show this. Suppose, for instance, you were at home. Suppose a poor woman were to come along, worn-out and weary. Suppose she were to ask permission to come in and sit down and rest herself. You give her permission, and as she sits there she unburdens her heart of some of the thousand woes that have been pressing upon it. When she has refreshed herself she rises, thanks you, and goes on her journey. Well, now, in a week that will be forgotten. But suppose, instead of a poor woman, another woman came along, even our own dear Queen Victoria, whom may God preserve! I say, suppose that she came along. Suppose that she were weary. Suppose that she asked permission to come in and to rest herself. Would that be forgotten next week or the week after? Would it not rather be the event of your life? Would it not be till your latest day a pleasure to tell how the Queen of England had entered your house, to tell how she had sat in that chair, and that she had said this and said that? Here then, you see, is the same act performed by two women, but the difference in the position of the persons makes all the difference in your estimate of the act. Now, my text tells us that somebody has done something for us. Our first question, of course, is, Who is that somebody? If it is a person of no position, of no influence, well then, we should say it was very kind, but it was a very great waste. If some person of no position and no influence should give himself, even give

himself to death, we should say that this was a proof of his love, but we should remain just where we were before that wonderful act had been performed. But if we find out that the person here spoken of, who has done this, occupies such a position that he cannot perform an inconsiderate act, and that whatever he does must be of infinite value, then at once you and I shall recognise the importance of the statement in the text. So then, I ask, Who is it of whom the text speaks? Like the old Pharisees, I would cry, "Who is this? who is this?" And, thank God, we have not to go far for an answer. I look at the preceding verse and I read this, "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us." There is the answer, Jesus Christ. Thank God, not a strange name to us, not a name that we hear to-night for the first time. It is a name that has been upon the tongues of men for ages, and men have not done with it yet. It is a name that has but to be spoken to-night to make a million hearts throb the faster. It is a name that has but to be whispered into the ear of the dying to make the eye unclose, and the tongue to speak again. It is the last name the saint whispers on earth; it is the first name he shouts in heaven. This is He, then, of whom the text speaks and says, "Jesus Christ gave Himself for us." I say again, do you still ask, Who is He, who is He? I refer you to the Book—the Book so full of Christ. Who is He?

"Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That ever mortals knew,
That angels ever bore;
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set our Saviour forth."

He, the mighty God—He, the Prince of the kings of the earth, God over all, blessed for ever—He, He gave Himself for us. O, that we could but believe it! Oh, if when we thought of the cross we also thought of the crown! Oh, if when we thought of the sacrifice, we remembered also the infinite value of that sacrifice, how our hearts would leap for joy, and how unhesitatingly we should commit ourselves for time and eternity to His merciful care! Here, then, I say, is the first thought in the text: The *Person* is JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly, let us look at HIS WORK. What has He done? The answer is very brief, but very complete, and very

encouraging to every penitent soul. I read thus, "He gave Himself for us." There is His work. You have a few short words, but you have the whole Gospel wrapped up in these few short words. Oh, if one had but power to bring out all that is hidden in these wonderful words! Oh, if we had the power to see to-night Who gave Himself for us! Let us look at it. May the Spirit help us to meditate! First, you will see that this work was *voluntary*. "He gave Himself." Voluntary; how could it be compulsory? I ask, Who could have dragged Him from His throne? I ask, Who could have wrested the sceptre from His grasp? Who could have torn the diadem from His brow? High o'er the angelic bands He reared His consecrated head; and there, with the Father before the foundation of the world, He looked down upon us—lost, ruined, perishing. He saw—oh, there is as much theology as there is poetry in this, and I love to let my very heart utter it!—He saw, not He heard, He saw—saw what? A world of rebels. Saw what? Every thought and inclination of man's heart in rebellion. Saw what?

"He saw, and—O amazing love!
He flew to our relief."

The text says, "He gave Himself for us."

And then it was not only voluntary, but *substitutionary*. He gave Himself for us—instead of us. Just take that idea, for that is the teaching of the text. Instead of us, substitutionary. Oh, I love to think of this, that all Christ did He did for me. You ask, How big is this *us*? and unless you have got clear notions of the extent of the *us*, you will never catch the full benefit and extent of the text. I ask, then, How big is the *us*? And I come to the Book for an explanation. How big? Gave Himself for us, for us. But, I ask, How many are there included in that *us*? and the answer that comes from this Book, I say, is very clear. It is just as big as "every man," "all men," "every creature," "the whole world." There you have the measure with which to measure it; there you have the standard by which to understand it. And now, with these thoughts before you, look again at my text, and see how it wraps round every one of us. He gave Himself for us. I look down at this congregation: For us. What, not one excluded? No. I go out with the teeming multitudes in this city: For us. I go home to my little home, and look at my little ones, and say, For us. I cannot find too few; bless

God, I cannot find too many. I see it stretching out, reaching to all nations and peoples and tongues; and if to-night I could gather all Adam's sons before me, and if I had a voice to reach them all, unhesitatingly would I utter the words of the text, "Jesus Christ gave Himself for us."

Ah! but, brother, if you want to realise the full blessing of this declaration, you must, instead of having it expanded, you must—shall I say so?—have it condensed. I believed in the universality of the atonement long before I believed in its individual application to myself. I was perfectly willing to discuss the matter with any of my young friends, and some of them entertained very opposite notions, and many a long discussion did we have, and of course it left us just where it found us. Ah! but the thought that brought salvation to my own heart was not that He loved everybody; it was that He loved me. Instead of spreading the sunshine over the world, and making it all beautiful, I just did as we used to do in our boyish days, got the sun-glass of faith, and I held up the sun-glass before the Sun of Righteousness, and I got the rays of that Sun, and I concentrated them down upon my own heart; and that heart which was so cold soon got warm, and where there had been darkness there was a holy flame enkindled; and the cry of my heart was, "He loved me, He gave Himself for me." As an article of our creed, we believe He died for everyone; but as an act of our faith, we must believe that all He did He did for us. Oh! when I take these words, "He loved me!" I like to go through the Gospels with that thought in my mind. And if there is one here who has not found peace with God, I would ask him to do that. Go through the history of Christ, and say, "He died for me, for me, for me, for me, for me." Just be selfish in your reading for once. Don't give it to the heathen yonder, the Fijians. Bring it all in for your own heart. Read it, "For me, for me, for me," till you bring it in, and then when you have drunk it in you will be prepared to say—

"He never passed by one,
Or He had passed by me."

He gave Himself for us. Ah! do you ask me what there is wrapped up in that word "gave," gave Himself? It is one of those wonderful words. It is so full that no human mind can understand all there is there. You have the whole story of Christ in that short, sweet, simple expression—the whole

history of our Redeemer. He gave Himself. Yes, it begins yonder—look, at the manger—and it does not end but at the cross; it follows Him all through life. All His wonderful life is wrapped up in this simple utterance, “He gave Himself for us.”

Then there is the third clause. We have looked at the Person, Jesus Christ. We have looked at His work. We have seen it to be voluntary, and we have seen it to be substitutionary. We want, in the third place, to look at HIS DESIGN IN DOING IT. Why did He do this? Why leave His Father’s throne above and wrap Him in our clay? Why did the King of Glory become a Man of Sorrows? Why all this? And here is the answer, “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Let us dwell upon this for a time—His design in doing this work. First, the text says, “that He might redeem us from all *iniquity*.” What do we understand by that? There is a possibility of our using what I may call theological words without having the meaning distinctly before us which those words were meant to convey. It is very possible for us to talk about “regeneration” all our lives, and yet have nothing like a definite idea of the meaning of the word. So we may talk about “justification,” and we may talk about “sanctification,” and it is possible for us to talk about “redemption,” and yet not thoroughly understand it. I dare say our young friends here have found out already that the best way to ascertain if we really know a thing is to try and teach it to children. We then soon find out that we have taken a great deal for granted; and it is just so with these terms. If I talk to a lot of children, it is easy to say, “Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity;” but I should not by these words convey any very distinct idea to a child’s mind. The child would be likely to say, “But what does redeem mean?” You see I want a synonym. I want another word or some more words that I can use instead of this, which a child can understand. Just so it is with us to-night; and so it is always. Well, I ask, What does this word redeem mean? If you will allow me to put a substitute that does not cover the whole ground, I admit, but that covers enough ground for our purpose to-night, I should put this word “deliver.” Now, the child can

understand that, and I want you to understand it; and I want you to understand that Jesus Christ gave Himself on purpose that He might deliver you and me. There is the text, then, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from all iniquity." Not just that He might form a party; not just that He might be preached about and admired; not that. Not just that His praises may be sung in beautiful music; not just that churches may be built to His honour and glory; but for something far beyond all that, and something that has a distinct and direct reference to everyone of us: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from all iniquity."

Let us look at it. How are we to understand it? Well, thus. I need not go over the whole ground, but merely glance at it. You and I are born in sin. You and I are therefore under condemnation. We talk very often, I think, as if we were to be condemned at the judgment-day; but the Book says we are condemned already. The sentence is passed upon all, "for that all have sinned." We are under condemnation; that is our state by nature. We are, in short, legally dead; and the world is our prison-house, where we await the day of execution. Now, you know very well that when a man is accused of murder, for instance, he is placed there in the dock. The trial ends, the verdict is brought in, "Guilty." The judge stops, and asks the question if the prisoner has anything to say. So long, that man has a legal life; but now the judge puts on his black cap, and then the sentence of death is pronounced; and the moment that sentence of death is pronounced that man's legal life ceases. He cannot make a will. If Rothschild himself were to die, and leave that man his property, the law would say, "There is not such a man; that man ceased to live in the dock yonder; that man has a physical life, but not a legal life." Now, I ask, what is to be done? I remember going down to Lancaster a little while ago, and when I got out at the station a gentleman said, "Do you know who that is?" pointing to a rather short, thick-set man who was walking just in front of me. I said, "No. Who is it?" He said, "That is Calcraft; he is come down for the execution to-morrow;" and pointing to the little portmanteau he held in his hand, my friend said, "That is to take away the prisoner's clothes in, because nothing belongs to the prisoner after he is condemned." Mercy says, we will lend you the clothes till the day of exe-

cution ; mercy says, we will give you your food ; mercy says all that, but the law does not know such a man ; the law does not acknowledge his existence—he is dead. And now, my brother, that is the condition of everyone of us by nature. We are under sentence ; and any moment we may go quick down into hell. Every moment we live, while we are in rebellion, is by permission of God's mercy—is an exercise of that love which in a higher degree gave Christ to die for us. Here, then, is our state: we are in prison ; you and I are in prison ; we are under condemnation, having a physical life, but no legal spiritual life ; and there can be none until the throne interferes. Thank God ! the throne is above the bench. Thank God ! when Moses dooms us to death, the King may grant us pardon. Now, what do we want ? Here we are in our prison—here we are ; what do we want ? Access to the throne, and a plea to urge when we get there. I ask, Have we any such plea by nature or any such access ? You know we have not. Have I any plea to urge as a sinner when I go to God ? Can I say that I am not guilty ? I cannot. My heart condemns me, and “God is greater than our heart.” Can I say I didn't know what I was doing, or that I was compelled to do what I did ? I cannot. Mine was a voluntary act. I broke the law, and here as a criminal I await the day of execution. Jesus saw this. The prison door was locked ; the beautiful world that He meant for a temple was turned into a dungeon ; man was locked in, and God and His mercy, so to speak, locked out ; and then it was that Jesus came, as you and I sing :—

“In the devouring lion's teeth,
Torn, and forsook of all, I lay ;
Thou sprang'st into the jaws of death,
From death to save the helpless prey.”

He took upon Himself our nature, as we know, became our representative, never rested until He took the keys of our prison-house into His hand, into a bleeding hand, and then flinging back the bolts, He opened the door, and went out, and said, “It is finished ;” and went up yonder that He might be ready to present our cry for mercy when we were prepared to offer it. But, I ask, what was done ? What was done when Jesus died ? What was done when Jesus ascended ? Were we delivered ? No ; we were only put within the reach of deliverance. Before then, we could not approach the throne ;

before then, pardon could not come to us; but now the door is open, and now any child of man, anywhere, may through Christ approach the Father, and may ask for the forgiveness of his sin. Yes, the prison-door is opened, but we are not delivered.

The text says He gave Himself to *deliver* us; not just to open the door, but to deliver us. Man may be in prison with the door open; and if the man is in bondage, though the door is opened, he cannot get out. That is just our position by nature; that is where we are if we leave off just at the cross. The door is open, the door *is* open, and we may thus draw near to God. But now there is something else to be done. What is that? Why, by the direct interference of the Holy Spirit we are to be taught that we are in bondage. We do not know it. The fact is, many of us have had the chains on so long that we have begun to be proud of them. The devil has gilded them, and tried to persuade us that they are gold; and men glory in their shame, and they clank the chains and think the sound is sweetest music. Do not you find thousands? Are there not tens of thousands around us to-night in London who think that their sins are their ornaments; who fancy, because they can swear, because they can cheat, because they can lie, because they can fight, that we ought to take our hats off to them? Ay, and was there no such feeling as that in our own minds once? Did we never glory in our shame? I ask you to press the question home upon your heart. Were you never proud of your worldliness? Were you never proud of your sinfulness? Did you never shake your chain and ask people to admire it? You know. Well, the Spirit came, Jesus ascended, the door of the prison-house was opened. Then the Holy Spirit came; and now the Spirit is completing that great work which Christ commenced. How does He do it? The very first thing the Holy Spirit does when He comes to a man is—shall I say?—to take the guilt off his chain, to make him feel that he is in bondage, to make the iron enter into his soul, and to make the man conscious of his state, and so to hate his slavery that he is willing to be saved in God's way. Oh! it is an era in a man's history when he begins to see that he is a slave. He has been accustomed to say, "Britons never shall be slaves." Has he not been talking about no slave being able to breathe in England? Has he not been talking over

and over again about the power he possesses, and about his being a free agent, and boasting of his freedom ; but, oh ! what an era in a man's history when he really finds he is a slave of the devil, and when he can use the beautiful language of the Church of England, and say he is tied and bound with the chain of his sin. Brother, have you ever found out this, that you are tied and bound with the chain of your sin ? Have you ever found that you are led captive by the devil at his will ? Have you ever found out that unless God Almighty interferes for you, there is nothing for you but sin here and damnation hereafter ? Have you never found this out ? If you have, thank God for it. If you have not, oh ! cry aloud to-night that the Spirit may come to convince you of sin. When the Spirit does it the man wakes up, he begins to be ashamed of his sin, he begins to find that he is not quite so strong as he thought he was ; he makes up his mind he will be a better man. I believe in nine cases out of ten when a man awakens to the fact that he is a slave to sin, he is unwilling to be saved by Christ. You and I are never willing to be saved by Christ till we find we cannot be saved without Him. Never ; no, no. Fling a rope's end out to a man who can swim, and he won't thank you. It is the man that is drowning who thanks you for the rope, and he clutches it for very life ; and so with one who thinks he can save himself. He sets to work when he feels his sin. He says, "*I feel my temper does master me ; I feel my pride, my lust, my passion do master me ; but I will conquer myself.*" And he sets to work to snap the chain, or perhaps he fancies he has got a file that can cut it, and he sets to work to try to cut his chain, and to get out of his bondage.

I know how it was in my case when I woke up to the fact of my being a slave. It was just after I had become a teetotaller, and I was then very proud of my pledge, and I had a notion that that pledge would enable me to do anything ; and I thought, "Well, now, I have but to promise that I will never yield again, and of course I shall be free." I thought it was that patent file that would cut off all the bonds of the devil ; so I made my vow. I had a great deal of trouble with my temper, and I made a vow that I would not yield to it. I solemnly promised and signed my name to it. What was the result ? I dare say all of you have made the same experiment, and with a like result. It did all very well till the next

temptation came; and then my vows were as empty as air, and my promises, I broke them again. I tried and failed, and tried and failed; and then, instead of presumption, the devil almost drove me to despair, and I thought, "Well, I never can be saved; even God Himself could not save me." And then it was—just when despair came—that I saw light in the darkness—just then, when it seemed as if eternal darkness and death must be mine, I heard a voice saying, "Look to Me and be saved." O, brother, have you ever got there? Have you ever felt yourself to be a slave? Have you ever tried and failed, and tried and failed, in your efforts, till the devil has led you to say, It is no use trying, there is no hope, therefore after my idols will I go? Have you ever got there? Ah! brother, if you have got there, then I trust you will go further. I trust you have got further. Oh! when despair takes hold of a man, then there is hope for him; and, thank God, there is hope for any man out of hell.

I was down in Yorkshire in January, and a man came to God's house just to insult us. He came and stood up with his infidel questions; he came in order that he might take notes of what was said, that he might go away to an infidel gathering and make use of them; and he showed me his note-book, for he was convinced of sin, and he told me, "I wrote until I could not write any more for my tears;" and when at last we concluded, he came into the vestry, for his heart was broken; and when they went home and told his mother of the incident, and that he had been with me, she said, "It is of no use for Mr. Garrett to spend any time over my lad; he is so bad that even God Himself could not save him!" Thank God, he is saved now. He is now a member of my church. From that hour he was changed. He signed the pledge, we went together and sought mercy for him, and there he is now rejoicing in God's forgiving love. Ah! despair had come to him, and he had felt his utter helplessness and hopelessness. He told me, "I have stood in a pulpit and preached;" and he said, "I have light enough in my head to guide a nation to heaven, and yet here I am with the blackness of darkness about me." And so despair came to him first, and then, thank God, light and salvation came. And if there is a soul here that has felt bondage, and is feeling it—if the iron is entering into your soul, I say, brother, now go further.

He gave Himself that He might deliver us; not that He

might just teach us; for, I ask, what is the good of teaching those who cannot hear? Not merely to set us an example; for what good is an example to those who cannot imitate it? He gave Himself to give light to our minds, to give grace to our hearts, to give freedom to our souls. He gave Himself that He might deliver us. Oh! I never shall forget the day when Jesus took my sins away. I remember I was in the iron furnace. At that time I would have given my right arm if I could have sung that verse, "My God is reconciled;" but though I began it I could not sing it. For three months I had been in the horrible pit, and I tried over and over again to say, "My God is reconciled;" but I always stopped short. "Oh! yes," I thought, "I will let the others sing it, and then I will join in further down; but, oh! if I could only go through with it and say, 'My God is reconciled,' I should be wild with joy." And so it went on, till all my old companions but one had found mercy; and then they told me I must have committed an unpardonable sin, and I began to believe it. And then one Saturday morning—I remember it very well, much better than last Saturday morning—away from all influences that produce enthusiasm, surrounded by the world, I saw what my text speaks of; how Jesus Christ had taken my place, how He had suffered my death, how He had become my representative, how He had risen from the dead, how He had taken possession of heaven in my name and was there, and how He was pleading for me; and I believed it with my whole heart; and before I knew well what I was saying, I cried out, "My God is reconciled;" and, blessed be God! it is so to-night. "My God is reconciled, His pardoning voice I hear." Not by works of righteousness, but by grace are we saved through faith. Brother, look to Christ to-night from the seat where thou art sitting; look to Christ, I say, and thou wilt understand the meaning of that little revival hymn—

"Soon as my all I venture
On the atoning blood,
The Holy Spirit enters,
And I am born of God."

He gave Himself to deliver us. Here we are, then, those of us who believe in Christ: our chains are snapped; those we could not snap before, we can now; we are not led captive of the devil now; we are conquerors, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

But then my text goes on further, and tells us not merely that the chains of our sin may be broken, but that they may *be taken off*. It appears to me that there is—shall I say?—the true Methodist ring about my text. Some of our friends say, “Yes, the chains are broken, but then the fragments are left; there are sin’s remains.” Am I to carry these broken chains with me to the grave? Am I never to be freed from them? I don’t like them. When I try to fight, they weigh down my hands; when I try to run, they cling around my legs; they fling me down again and again. I wish I could be entirely free from my chains. I long for it. Can it not be? There are some of our friends who say, “No; you must carry the remains of those broken chains with you to your grave.” I say, I don’t like that. Not saved from all sin? Well, what sin is it that Christ cannot save us from? Is it the love of the world? Oh, no! for “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Well, then, is it malice? No; for “if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Well, then, is it pride? No; for “pride goeth before destruction.” I ask, Who is to save me from all these things? and the answer is, Christ. What, I say, can Christ save me from these great sins, and are there some little ones He cannot save me from? Can He tear up the stalwart oak, and not the tender sapling? Can He snap the cable, and not break the small cords? God has “laid help upon One that is mighty;” and “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.”

“Let others hug their chains,
For sin and Satan plead,
And say, from sin’s remains
They never can be freed:
Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me,
We shall from all our sins be free.”

God grant it may be so to-night. “Who gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from all iniquity.”

And then it says, “And purify unto Himself *a peculiar people*.” To deliver us from all sin, and then not to fling us out and leave us as a mob, but to gather us into one, to separate us unto Himself! Think of this. Christ came to be the head of a new party. That party has a great many distinctions, and yet it is only one. Christ’s party is not divided in that sense. We have but one Head.

That one Head is Christ. He gave Himself for us that He might separate us to Himself. Ah! yes, we may talk about Luther; we may talk about Calvin; we may talk about Wesley; we may talk about Whitefield; but Christ is the centre of His body, and Christ's name is above all other names. Ah! we must lower our regimental flags when we come under the Royal Standard. So we do here. Christ is the head! Christ is the head! I hear some of our friends, you know, sometimes talking about having "Methodist" written upon their coat-backs; and when they are in the warmth of their love and zeal, then they are willing to have Methodist written upon their coat-backs. Well, I don't know but that, if it would do any good, I should be willing as far as that is concerned to have Methodist written upon me; but I say to our friends, Take care if you have Methodist written upon your coat, that it is upon your week-day coat. There are some folk who have it written upon their Sunday best, but if you are to have Methodist written on your coat, have it on the coat in which you play with your children; have it on the coat in which you buy and sell. Let it be on the coat in which you ride in a railway carriage, and in which you do your business and mingle in society; and if you have not your Methodism written on your week-day coat, brush it off your Sunday best, and wait until you can have it on all, or else it will do no good to anybody. But there is a name better than that—the name of Jesus itself—written on the forehead and in the heart. Brethren, is Jesus's name on your heart and on your forehead? I do not ask you whether you are Methodists; there is something far higher than that. I do not ask you to which regiment you belong; but I ask you, Do you belong to the army? I do not ask you which name you bear; but are you loyal to your King, who gave Himself for us, that He might separate us to Himself as a peculiar people? They are coming from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south; they are of all colours, and of all kinds; but they all come to one centre, though brought by different means. They come by different ways, but they come to one centre. Brethren, can you say to-night—

'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come?"

Can you say—

“To me that bleeding love of His
Shall ever precious be!
Whatever He to others is,
He’s all in all to me?”

God give you grace to say it!

“Separate to Himself a peculiar people.” He is the Master, and we are the servants. He gives the commands, and we obey them. We walk in His ways and breathe His Spirit. We copy His example, and become every day more like Him; and in a wicked world a man that does this must be peculiar. The man that is most like Christ will be most peculiar. Would to God we were all more peculiar! Ah! my friends, some of us have got so near the world that we hardly know whether we are in the Church or not. Oh! come up nearer to Christ. Be like Him. Drink into His Spirit. Copy His example. Then it shall be well with thee.

“A peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Yes, they are delivered from evil; they are drawn to Christ; and now they are to be like Christ, going about doing good. Not just doing good works, but glad to do them. There is an impelling power in a Christian that won’t let him be idle. My young friends, was not the very first impulse of your renewed heart an impulse to work for Christ? When you were brought to the Saviour you did not want anybody to tell you to go and do good works. We talk about the enthusiasm of the young Christian. Why do we talk about his enthusiasm? Because he is apt to be surrounded by a lot of icebergs that threaten to freeze him to death very soon. But, brethren, if we were to keep our original enthusiasm, and grow in this grace, as well as in others, depend upon it the world would soon feel the effect. Let a man come to Christ, and he will follow Christ’s example. Some people seem to be separated to Christ, but they are not zealous for good works. They are zealous for frames and feelings: they are exceedingly anxious to be happy. They seem to go about asking somebody to make them happy, and then, as they say, they want to sit and sing themselves away to everlasting bliss. It is only selfishness all this. Christianity makes a man care not so much about being happy as about being useful.

If I have Christ in my heart, then I shall have a sympathy with the perishing about me, and I shall be willing to make any and every sacrifice in order to save them. “Zealous for

good works." That is just what we want now. Why should there be zeal for worldly objects and apathy in the Church? Why should politicians be zealous and the Church be apathetic? Why should men of business be zealous and the Church be cold? I ask, why should those who engage in our moral and social movements all be energetic and we apathetic? We have fire everywhere else, and we want fire in the Church. "Zealous for good works." The type of the Christian is a man going to God and asking Him, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" I had a capital illustration of this on Christmas morning. One of my customs—and it is a custom that has been blessed to my soul—is that of preaching before breakfast on Christmas morning. I always do it, and have always had a blessing. On the last occasion a gentleman came to hear me. You may recollect it was a very wet morning. There was a very large gathering; but I noticed a gentleman sitting in the chapel with whose face I was not familiar; and I thought by his expression that he was a German. We got through the service, and were blessed with the presence of God's Spirit. The next morning that gentleman sent for me. I went to him, and found that he was a Churchman, but had been attracted by the early morning service, and had come to hear us; and while standing in the chapel the Holy Spirit had come to him and shown him his sins; and he had gone away from that place feeling he was a bondsman and a slave. "Oh," he said, "I wish I could have met with some Methodists who would have taken me down to Oldham-street lovefeast, for I did not know what to do. While others were happy all that Christmas-day I was in my bed-room pleading with God to have mercy upon me, and at last, thanks be to His name, He heard my prayer, and He delivered me, and now I have sent to you, and wish to tell you first what God has done; and in the next place that, having obtained deliverance myself, I feel I must set to work to help others, for I have already lost a good deal of time."

If he had repeated twenty catechisms to me he could not have more thoroughly convinced me of his Christianity than by that practical confession of his creed. He told me that his great danger was in the direction of strong drink. I did not say a word about drink in my sermon; but the Holy Spirit had been at work, and had convinced him that, if necessary, he must cut off his right arm, and that he must now

care for others who were suffering like him. It was then only ten o'clock, and he told me that he had sent for me to tell me that he had already invited every drunkard in Cheetham-hill to breakfast on New Year's morning, in order to have an opportunity of talking to them, and of trying to save them. I felt that was the right thing. The man was going to work. He had a sympathy with those who were down, and now, he himself having been raised up, he was determined to exert himself on behalf of those in bondage. He told me that he had been on the verge of hell, but now seemed to be at the portal of heaven. About sixteen men were brought together at his invitation that I might talk to them. He occupied the chair, and told them that he had invited them that he might tell them what God had done for him on Christmas morning. He said:—"I was a slave. I went to God's house; and there I heard the words of love and mercy. I saw my sin, and I saw my danger, and I saw what there was before me; but saw likewise how willing Christ was to save me, and I went to Him, and, blessed be His name, He has saved me. And He who has saved me is willing and able to save anybody, and I just tell you this; and now I leave it with Mr. Garrett to talk about the way."

This care which he showed for the afflictions of others was just the result of his Christianity, and just what we are anxious to see evinced in the case of all those who are brought to Christ, and made zealous of good works with the holy fire burning within them; no longer asleep, but awake; no longer slaves, but free, and their whole being dedicated to God and to good works—body, soul, and spirit, entirely consecrated on the altar to the service of Him who redeems us. This is what is the want of London. For my part, I wonder how some of you good folk keep your religion at all in London. It is bad enough in my town, but I have thanked God again and again to-day that my life has not been cast in London. Unless you keep the holy fire burning, I don't know what is to save you amidst influences so adverse, and with so many things tending to destroy your spirituality; so many things calculated to take you from your Bible and from your closet and from your communion. If you don't mind, the fire will go out, and there will only be left an altar with some smoking embers instead of the bright flame which used to burn there. We

want men to be zealous for good works, and not so frequently to hear, "I pray thee have me excused," when we go to them, as some of us are in the habit of doing, to ask for their sympathy and aid. I have gone before now to a man of this class, and have asked him how the Sunday School is getting on in their place, and he has said, "Well, I don't know much about the Sunday School; that is not just in my line; Mr. So-and-So will be able to tell you about that, as it is quite a hobby with him." "Well, then," I have said, "how is the Tract Society getting on?" "Well, I am not quite sure whether we have a Tract Society now." "Oh! indeed; well, how is your Band of Hope?" "Well, I don't just see 'eye to eye' with you on the temperance question." Ah! this is not being zealous for good works. I think we have a right to expect a man to be zealous for some good works. I can forgive a man if he is labouring in one department, while I devote my energies to another; but let there be a zeal for good works. I can do with anything rather than this do-nothingism, and we want Christians to work, every man looking after his neighbour's welfare. And how can a woman be better employed than in visiting and telling other women of Christ? And if our young girls went out seeking to win other young girls; and if our men of business and our young men went out, and lent their influence to win other men of business and other young men, and to bring them in, there would be more progress; and we should remember that all the Lord's servants should be preachers, and zealous for good works.

The other day I was down at a railway station with a friend, and there I began looking at a couple of engines. "Beautiful engines, are they not?" "Yes." "They seem to be constructed by the same maker, and I don't see any difference in them." As we were talking, the engine-driver came up, and I remarked, "We have just been admiring the engines; very splendid ones they are. I should think they are just alike." The man looked at me significantly. "Yes; they are much alike outside, but that one there has no fire burning, and it cannot even move itself; but this one here has the fire burning and the steam up, and I am just going to jump upon it, and you will see it run away with a whole village at its heels." Well, I thought, there is just that difference between the formalist and the true

Christian. The formalist is to all appearance a splendid engine; but there is no fire, and the steam is not up. Another, a Christian, may not be so powerful-looking or so showy, but then the fire is burning and the steam is up; and while the one cannot help himself, the other will by his zeal affect a whole neighbourhood. Oh, if we go away with a holy fire burning, and with this zeal go into our warehouses, and workshops, and barracks, and to our professions, telling of the dear Saviour we have found, we shall soon see a marvellous change in Methodism, and a new life enkindled throughout the universal Church. "Zealous for good works."

I have only to ask you, Has the text been accomplished in your case? Brother, Christ has done His part; have you done yours? Christ has given Himself for you. Bear with me for a moment. I would begin with our dear young friends here, and ask them. You, my brother, and you, my sister, are you delivered from sin? Are you delivered, or are you a slave to-night? Brother, if the end should come to-night, I ask, what is there before you for the morrow? I was in Cornwall a fortnight since, when that terrible accident happened at Camborne. You remember those young girls who were suffocated at Dr. Smith's factory. Most of those young girls belonged to us. Two of them were out of our singing-pew. On Good Friday they had been in their place in the singing-pew; on Saturday they joined another choir up higher. One of them, when she came out of chapel, went up to Miss Smith, and said, "Oh, Miss Smith, I feel as happy as if I were in heaven." God had saved her only the week before: she little thought that next day she would be in heaven. Ah, we know not what a day may bring forth. Gray hairs will not be a crown of glory to us all. It is of no use to conceal it, that some of you in early life will pass away. But, oh! to feel that one's name is written in heaven, and to be able to say, as Matthew Mead said when dying, "It is well with me!" He said, "I have done my day's work, and I am going home, as every honest man ought to do when his work is done; and, thank God, I have a good home to go to." There is no sting then. Brethren, are you delivered from sin? does passion conquer you? does appetite conquer you? does ambition conquer you? does envy conquer you? does lust conquer you? Is the bond upon your soul to-night, my brother? If so, cry to God for

help, and help will come. Thank God, you may be saved now, you may be saved while I speak. If you are willing to be saved on God's terms, then I offer you a full and free salvation. Do I hear some of you say, as poor Robert Burns said when he was told this, "Oh, it is too good to be true; it is too good to be true." Is there some one who has come in here, who has spent a life of thirty or forty years, and who is saying, "Do you mean that the sins of a lifetime can be pardoned in a moment?" Well, I do mean that, I do mean that. "Ah," you say, "that is too easy a way." Too easy, brother, too easy? I was standing the other day down at the foot of the Blackstone-edge, and I looked at that hill as it rose up between Lancashire and Yorkshire. Now, suppose somebody had put us there fifty years ago, brother. Suppose, some one had said, "Go through that hill in five minutes." You would have said, "Five minutes! No, not in five minutes, nor five hours, nor five days; nobody ever went through that hill, and nobody ever can." But wait, wait till the line is projected, wait till the navvies come, wait till they with their strong arms scoop out the tunnel, wait till the lines are laid down, wait till the locomotive is formed, and now, as it comes puffing up, jump in, and you are through in five minutes. You see how this is. All the hard work was done before you got there, and just so it is with poor souls getting to heaven. Thank God! the hard work was done long ago. It is now easy for you, my brother. It was hard for Jesus: He gave Himself for you. Look at His agony; see Him sweat great drops of blood; see Him in the garden crying. Is it too easy? What, that bloody sweat! Brother, sister, is it too easy? Thank God! the hard work is done; and now to him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is accounted to him for righteousness. Oh! believe in His dignity, believe His infinite merits. Oh! brother, before thou dost come to the cross, oh! go and stand before His Divine throne; and then, when thou dost come back, thou wilt understand what the poet meant when he said—

"Were all the sins that men have done
Since worlds were made and time begun,
In will and word, and thought and deed,
Laid on one guilty sinner's head,
The blood of Christ, that crimson sea,
Would take the guilt of all away."

God help us to believe it!

I WILLS.

BY THE REV. NICHOLAS BISHOP, M.A.

1. I WILL, by God's help, endeavour to regulate my life according to the will of God.

2. I WILL spend a certain portion of every day in private devotion, and consider that I have asked amiss if I receive no signal answer to my prayer.

3. I WILL consider every day lost that does not produce some visible fruit of holiness, and some lasting good to the world.

4. I WILL learn to think so much of God's gifts to me, that I will never murmur at anything He withholds.

5. I WILL do my utmost never to be unemployed, nor to be triflingly employed.

6. I WILL never speak of myself, or of anything that I have done, unless there be good reason for it; and will never mention the defects of others unless compelled.

7. I WILL speak to at least two persons every week about their soul's salvation, and invite them to the house of God, and when it is possible read to them the Scriptures and pray with them.

8. I WILL never willingly be absent from the means of grace; and will endeavour to be always present at the time appointed.

9. I WILL never expect God's forgiveness unless I can forgive all men their trespasses.

10. I WILL set apart a certain portion of my income for the cause of Christ; and, as the least that a Jew, under the Law, could give, was one-tenth, and the Gospel being an extension of the law of benevolence, I will not give less than that amount.

11. I WILL do nothing without Christ, and, trusting in Him, I will fear to do nothing that He has commanded.

12. I WILL rely upon God for constant strength to live, not to myself, but to save the multitudes that are ready to perish.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. THORNLEY SMITH.

“The Spirit giveth life.”—2 COR. iii. 6.

THERE is a widespread want among men, of which many are wholly unconscious, but which is felt by multitudes in increasing numbers. It is not the want of wealth, or power, or fame; but the want of spiritual life. There are many who are so insensible to things eternal and unseen that they are content to live a mere animal life, or a life of sensual gratifications and pleasures. There are others who are satisfied with an intellectual life, and who aspire to nothing higher than a dream-like existence amid the beauties of nature, the delights of literature, or the charms of poetry and art. But there are others again who, assured of their Divine origin, and of the immortality of their being, are panting after a higher life, a spiritual life, a life in God, which shall prepare them for a future and unending life in His immediate and ever-blessed presence.

But how is it to be realised, and by what means may we attain a gift so precious as the higher spiritual life? Our text gives the answer to this inquiry, “*The Spirit giveth life.*” Literally the words are, “*The Spirit quickeneth,*” which is the reading of the margin; and thus we are reminded of the saying of our Lord, which the apostle probably had in view, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak to you, they are Spirit, and they are life” (John vi. 63).

The agent, the gift, and the manner and extent of its bestowal, will occupy our thoughts in the attempt to unfold the import of these words.

I. The AGENT. There can be no doubt that by the Spirit here, is meant the Holy Spirit of God—the third Person of the blessed Trinity; but fully to understand the apostle's words we must consider what they *exclude* as well as what they *include*; for thus only shall we see our entire dependence on the Spirit for the life we long to possess.

1. The Spirit giveth life, *not the flesh*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," said Christ to Nicodemus (John iii. 6). And St. John, speaking of believers, says that they are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (i. 13.) Observe that infant on its mother's lap. How beautiful it is! how lovely! how attractive! You call it the picture of innocence, and you can scarcely suppose that there is any guile in a form which looks so pure. Yet in virtue of its natural birth it has no spiritual life, for it was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. It possesses a depraved nature, and if no change passes upon it, it will go astray from the womb speaking lies, and the seeds of evil which dwell within its heart will develop themselves in a sinful and vicious life. It cannot be denied that some children seem from their infancy far less disposed to unholy passions than others; yet even such children, the offspring though they are of Christian parents, do not possess a regenerated nature, but need, even as others, to be quickened by the Holy Spirit into newness of life. It is doubtless an unspeakable blessing to possess godly ancestors, for there are qualities both of mind and heart which such ancestors transmit to their children; whilst the children of such ancestors are far less likely to take a vicious course than are the children of the dissolute and the ungodly; yet none of us may boast that we "have Abraham to our father," or think that because our parents were holy no spiritual change is necessary for us. The Spirit giveth life, and not the flesh, and therefore, holy as our parents may have been, we must receive into our hearts a principle which we do not receive in virtue of our natural birth.

2. The Spirit giveth life, *not the letter*. Such is St. Paul's assertion in the text and context. He is speaking of the Christian ministry, and he says, God "hath made us able

ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." By the letter is meant the law of Moses, or the Old Testament dispensation in general, which, because of man's inability to fulfil its requirements, brings condemnation and death. By the law is the knowledge of sin; and hence the apostle says elsewhere, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died" (Rom. vii. 9). But by the law is no remission of sin, and, therefore, no spiritual life. In itself it is holy, just, and good, but through the weakness of his flesh, man is unable to obey it; and however strict his morality may be, he falls short of the standard it places before him. Delusive were the hopes of the Jewish Pharisees who went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God; and equally delusive are the hopes of Christian Pharisees (for many such there are among us) who are clinging to the same principle, losing the Spirit in the letter, and the substance of religion in the shade. By an observance of the letter of God's word, whether written in the Old Testament or the New, you will never gain life, for the simple reason that you must live before you can observe it, inasmuch as it must be observed not outwardly only, but in the deepest recesses of the mind.

3. The Spirit giveth life, *not rites and ceremonies*. Of these we would by no means speak disparagingly. If scriptural in their character, and if rightly observed, they are oftentimes the channels through which the Spirit conveys grace to the humble worshippers—the golden pipes through which the golden oil flows into the vessels meet for its reception; but of what value are they in and of themselves? The decorated altar, the mitred priest, the imposing procession, the waving of incense, the chanting of a liturgy—these may produce a soothing effect upon the mind of the devotee, or may gratify his æsthetic or poetic taste; but can they give him spiritual life? O believe me, it is not by such means that the piety of England will be revived, and the vitality of her churches strengthened and sustained. Even the sacraments, by whomsoever they may be administered, will not of themselves give life. Baptism, in the case of infants, is, I believe, no unmeaning rite, but one in which we have reason to expect that a special blessing will be given in answer to believing prayer; but to a child baptised in

infancy, whom I see growing up rebellious and self-willed, I must preach as emphatically as to any other child the necessity of being born again. In the case of an adult, baptism will not operate as a charm, as some appear to think, for then it would be wise, as did the Emperor Constantine, to defer receiving the rite until the approach of the final hour. It can have no efficacy unless accompanied with penitential faith on the part of the recipient, and even then it is the Spirit that gives life, not the ceremony or the rite. And what shall we say of the Holy Eucharist? This much, certainly, that it is a most blessed means of grace which those who wilfully neglect do so to their serious loss. But it can neither give life to those who are dead, or nourish life in those who live, unless they discern through it, by faith, the Lord's body. Even if the real presence were true in the strictly Romish sense, and the elements, as they are called, were changed into the actual body and blood of Christ, the outward reception of them would be of no avail; whence it is that thousands repair to the sacramental table, but return from it the same persons as they were before, as destitute as ever of spiritual life, and quite as far from God. Through means and ordinances of every kind must we look, and far above them, even to the everlasting hills, whence alone the perennial waters flow—whence alone the life-giving power descends.

II. The GIFT must now be carefully considered. "The Spirit giveth LIFE."

When nature was a chaos, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and life and beauty rose upon the surface of the earth; when man had been formed out of the dust of the ground, and lay upon it cold and motionless, God breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul; and still the Spirit of God is brooding over all things, and bringing harmony out of confusion, and life out of death. The same Spirit gives life to the soul of man—a Divine life, without which its noblest faculties lie dormant, and the purposes of its being fail.

1. The Spirit gives *the religious life*. He awakens in the soul a delight in prayer, in fellowship with God, in hallowed intercourse with the Father and the Son. How cold and formal are all acts of worship until He inspires the breast with devotion's heavenly flame! Men drag themselves to the closet or to the Christian sanctuary, and there they assume

the attitude of worshippers, and there they utter words of prayer and supplication; but hosannas languish on their lips, and ere long their very manner indicates that it is a "weariness unto them," and they are glad when they can break away from the irksome task, and return again to the pursuits or pleasures of the world. But when the life-giving Spirit breathes upon the soul, it understands for the first time what true prayer is—

"The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles on the breast"—

and presently it rises as on eagle's wings, approaches the mercy-seat of God, and bathes itself in the light which streams from the eternal throne.

Do you ask, By what process is the life of devotion enkindled in the soul? It is an important question, but one not difficult to answer. The Spirit first brings home to the conscience the broken law, awaking penitential sorrow and distress, then takes of the things which are of Christ—His atoning death and all-prevalent intercession—and shows them to the contrite soul, and then assists that soul to exercise personal trust in the Son of God, on which He sheds abroad in it the love of God, giving the believer the spirit of adoption, and enabling him to cry, Abba, Father. This spirit of adoption is the spirit of prayer; and just when that spirit is received the new life of devotion is enkindled in the breast, and the soul now rises where it never did before, into the holiest place beyond the veil. (Rom. viii. 15, 16. Heb. x. 19-22). The veil is rent, the way to the mercy-seat is open, and the spirit with exulting joy soars into an atmosphere of light, and peace, and love.

We all of us want—O, do we not?—more of this religious life. What coldness, what formality, what indifference characterise many of our acts of worship, public as well as private; and how far do we seem to stand from that throne before which we profess to bow! Whence shall we obtain the life of piety—the life of holy and seraphic devotion—the life of intimate fellowship with the Great Supreme? The Spirit must enkindle it, by giving us a deeper consciousness of God's reconciling love. And this He waits to do; this, I trust, He is even now doing; and, oh! if every cloud which intervenes between us and our Father who is in heaven were dissipated, with what rapturous joy should we go to Him in

prayer, and speak to Him, and pour forth before Him the emotions of our childlike hearts! Let the Spirit, brethren, give you life. Pray even if you cannot pray. Plead even if you cannot plead. And ere long He will visit you in the plenitude of His grace, and then you will both pray and plead for yourselves, for the Church, and for the world.

2. The Spirit gives a *higher moral life*. The religious life has special reference to God; the moral life has special reference to ourselves and to our fellow-men. If the unrenewed man is destitute of the former, so also, in its noblest characteristics, is he destitute of the latter. He may, it is true, be amiable in disposition, courteous in manner, and just and upright in his general conduct towards men; yet tried by the standard of the law of God, especially as unfolded in the Sermon on the Mount, his moral life will be found defective, not in minor, but even in essential points. And what is the morality of the masses of mankind who have never experienced the renovating power of truth? Will it bear to be held up to the light of day? We fear that in some of the higher walks of society there are frequent breaches of the moral law of which the civil power takes no cognizance whatever. Are there no mean artifices in trade and commerce practised by men of considerable reputation? Are there no family feuds and quarrels among those who take rank with the good and amiable? Are there no revengeful passions in the breasts of some who are considered as, on the whole, very upright characters? The morals of society are partly, no doubt, affected in this country by public opinion, and public opinion is in favour of a high tone of morality; but what has elevated public opinion to the standpoint it now occupies? We answer without hesitation, the influence of Christianity. The breath of the Spirit has passed over the land, and has given a new moral life to thousands of its inhabitants, the beauty and excellence of which are so generally acknowledged that society would be glad if the heaven were universally diffused. It is the man on whom the renovating power of the Spirit has descended whose life is a truly moral one. Not only has that Spirit enkindled in his breast a life of piety towards God calling into play the devout affections of the soul and leading it out in acts of prayer and praise; but it has enkindled also a life of charity towards men, which manifests itself in works of truth, and justice, and benevolence, and pity, of

the purest and most disinterested kind. But are there not immoral Christians? No. There are immoral professors not a few; but immoral Christians there are none. A Christian may often err in judgment, may not unfrequently be hasty in temper, and may sometimes be overtaken in a fault; but immoral he will not be, for "he that is born of God doth not" wilfully and deliberately "commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9.)

But not to commit sin is only a negative morality. That of the Christian goes much further, urging him to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," to relieve the distressed, to clothe the naked, to look on all men as his brethren, and to act towards all with whom he has to do a brother's part. And whilst the life of the mere moralist flags, languishes, and ultimately dies, that of the Christian moralist lives and ever lives, flourishing the more, like a bed of camomile, for being crushed and trodden under foot. It is not a mere impulse, but a steady principle which carries him out in unremitted efforts for the good of others; and even when his physical life begins to droop, his moral life is still vigorous and strong, so that, like the stately palm-tree of the East, some of its richest fruits are produced in old age.

3. The life given by the Spirit is a *holy life*. Holiness is the union of religion and morality. The one is often cultivated without the other; but religion without morality is only formalism, and morality without religion is like a dressed-up corpse. It is the union of the two which gives reality to both; and when united, the product is holiness of heart and life. Holiness is, however, something more. It is purity; it is likeness to God; it is the image of the Creator stamped upon the soul. But can creatures such as we be holy? Is it possible to live a holy life in the midst of a world so hostile to holiness, and surrounded by those who are so inimical to its spirit? These unholy passions—can they be conquered? These impure affections—can they be subdued? These angry tempers—can they be mastered and put down? They can; for the Spirit giveth life, and the life He gives is a life which is hid with Christ in God; a life of which Christ's was the glorious pattern; a life in which are exemplified all the virtues that ennoble man. The Spirit applies to the conscience that blood which cleanses from all

sin; and not only regenerates, but wholly sanctifies the soul, so that it attains a perfection which, though not sinless, is of the most elevating character, and ultimately ripens into a full meetness for immortality.

This life is given in the germ, when the penitent believer is born again; and from that moment it expands and grows, until it becomes so vigorous as to bid defiance to the severest storms. And what is it when perfected? It is such a living fellowship with God Himself, the Holy One, that every act the Christian performs, every word he utters, every disposition he cultivates, springs from disinterested love. We acknowledge that the life of holiness in its highest traits is but seldom exemplified, yet exemplified it has been in all ranks of human society; and if believers saw it to be their privilege to attain it, and were resolved to be satisfied with nothing short of it, it would be exemplified to a very large extent. The fault is not with the Giver that this life is so often stunted in its development; but with those who are content that it should be so. Fain would the Spirit give life, and that to every one, in exuberant fulness and blessedness and power; but we who are its recipients have such narrow and contracted views that we fail to drink in the vivifying streams, and thus fall short of that measure of holiness to which the writings of St. Paul urge us to inspire. Let us pray for enlarged hearts, and let us remember that the Spirit can do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." (Eph. iii. 20.)

4. The life given by the Spirit *is eternal life*. All life emanates from the Spirit, so that the Psalmist says, "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. civ. 30). But we speak to-day of a life which is deathless and immortal. We do not say that it is impossible to destroy it, for its continuance depends, in part, on the care and assiduity of its possessor; hence the exhortation of St. Paul: "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thes. iv. 19). But nothing save the indifference of those in whose breasts it has been enkindled, can either injure or imperil it. It bids defiance to storm and tempest, to poverty and want, to persecution and imprisonment, to affliction and pain. Though, under heavy pressure, it sometimes seems to have expired, yet, like the teil-tree and the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, it springs forth again and appears as fresh and as

beautiful as ever. To crush and to destroy it was the object of the terrible persecutions which raged under the reigns of Nero and Domitian. Could they destroy it? No; it flourished in the cell, it flourished on the rack, it flourished in the arena, it flourished at the stake. And in later times, down to the present age, this principle has proved itself equally indestructible. In what climate will it not thrive? What conflicts will it not brave? Through what furnace will it not pass? It lives and sings even in the article of death, and when the spirit escapes from its earthly tabernacle it carries this life with it to a fairer region, where it will flourish for ever in the paradise of God. We have seen a little vessel tossed upon the billowy sea, now rising on the crested wave, now sinking into the trough below; and as we have watched her from the shore, we have said to ourselves, Can she live in such a storm as this? When, by-and-by, the wind has subsided, and the tempest has been succeeded by a comparative calm, and then we have seen the little vessel, not materially injured, and with, perhaps, a single sail set, making for the haven just in sight. So also have we seen a child of God tossed on the boisterous sea of life, the waves and the billows frequently going over him, and a night of sorrow wrapping itself about his head; and as we have observed him, we have been ready to ask, Can his faith, his confidence, and his hope survive all this? When presently we have heard him sing, or, not if strong enough to sing, yet feebly say—

“When passing through the watery deep,
I ask in faith His promised aid;
The waves an awful distance keep,
And shrink from my devoted head;
Fearless, their violence I dare,
They cannot harm, for God is there!”

III. But there is yet another point on which we must for a moment dwell—THE EXTENT to which the Spirit gives this life.

1. He gives it *to individuals*. They form the masses of society; but the Spirit gives them life not in their corporate capacity, but in their separate condition. Just as in the great field of nature He causes each individual plant, and flower, and insect, and animal to live, so in the wide domain of grace He gives life to each believer in the Son of God. There is a theology somewhat rife in the present day which speaks disparagingly of individual conversions, and tells us

that the work may be effected, through the ordinances of the Church, in the aggregate, or on collective assemblies. This is the theory of the Church of Rome, and accordingly the object of her missionaries has often been to make converts of men by inducing them to accept baptism in collective numbers, and then she has boasted of her wonderful success. But the Gospel comes to each individual, and teaches him that he stands before God as a unit, that he is personally amenable to the law, and that *he* is in need of a new spiritual life and must be born again. And what says experience on this matter? Does not every Christian know that he lives? Is he not conscious that new principles and affections have been planted in his soul? "I think, therefore I am," was the argument of a philosopher. "I love, therefore I live," is the argument of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is sensible of a Divine impulse which leads him to the throne of God in prayer, and which impels him to seek the paths of holiness, in which alone he feels that he can be at rest; and knowing that formerly no such Divine impulses dwelt within his breast, he is assured that he has been made the subject of a momentous change—that he has indeed passed from death unto life.

But, whilst the Spirit gives life to individuals, He does not, therefore, destroy their individuality. What a rich variety of life is there in nature! Philosophers tell us that the essential principle of physical life is everywhere the same—in the daisy as in the oak; in the worm as in the elephant. Yet how infinitely varied and diversified are its forms! In like manner the principle of the spiritual life is everywhere the same—in the new-born penitent and in the aged saint; in the humble door-keeper of God's house on earth and in the glowing seraph before His throne in heaven. But how differently does it manifest itself in different persons! Each Christian receives into himself the life of the Spirit, but each Christian exhibits it in a somewhat different form. The Spirit inspired alike St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John to write certain books of the New Testament; but how varied is the style of their several productions, and how different are the phases in which they set forth the truth. So, too, the Spirit now gives life to every believer in Christ Jesus, yet each one displays its virtues in his own manner, and in accordance with his individual traits of character. It is well that it is so; and to find fault with

another because he is not a counterpart of yourself is most unreasonable; whilst to imitate another and to try to be just like him is useless, foolish, and absurd. The Spirit's grand design is that each one should be himself, and possessed of a renewed nature and of sanctified affections, should fill up the place allotted to him as best he can to the honour and the praise of God.

2. He gives it to *Churches and communities*. Churches too often droop and languish, and Christ has to complain of them as He did of the Churches of Asia Minor, that they have become lukewarm, or that they have lost their first love. How, in this case, shall they be resuscitated? how regain the life they formerly possessed? By the erection of more splendid sanctuaries? by the observance of a more pompous ritual? by a return to ancient forms and ceremonies? All these things existed prior to the Reformation, yet the Churches of Europe were for the most part so destitute of spiritual life that they utterly failed to fulfil the purposes of their existence. Will, then, a more learned and eloquent ministry suffice? or will the setting up of some novel modes of worship be effectual? or will the proclamation of some half-neglected doctrines be sufficient? All these have been tried in instances not a few, but, unless as the result of a quickening already felt, have been powerless and vain. For in themselves all such appliances are merely mechanical, and can no more give life to a dead or drooping Church than wheels and springs can give life to an automaton. You may construct a steam-engine, all the parts of which shall be formed of the very best material and shall be finished in the most exquisite style, but you cannot set that engine in motion without fire and heat. Even so you may form a Church, the organisation of which shall appear perfect and complete, yet for all the purposes of a Church it will be useless without the living fire from heaven. The Spirit giveth life to churches. If, then, any of our Churches, local or more extended, are languishing in the least degree, and if the life of any of them has become enfeebled from whatever cause, whither shall they look? and to whom shall they repair? There is but one source whence the re-vivifying power can come, and but one agent who can impart the gift. It must come from the Eternal throne, and the Eternal Spirit must descend and bring it. Our Churches everywhere need a

genuine revival; and in the anxiety which some of them feel for their greater efficiency, there is danger lest they should become impatient, and have recourse to means for awakening excitement which would prove unhealthy, and which would be followed by a depressing and injurious reaction. This is wholly unnecessary. In quietness and confidence shall be our strength, and the living members of our Churches, who grieve over the indifference they see around them, must plead for the descent of the Spirit in His quickening and renovating power; and if He comes—as come He doubtless will—they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and their scent shall be as the dew of Lebanon.

3. Once more, the Spirit gives life *to nations*. Let us survey for a moment the valley of vision whither the Spirit of the Lord carried the Prophet Ezekiel. It was full of dry bones, which were scattered abroad in every direction, and behold these were very many, and lo they were very dry. That valley of dry bones represented the whole house of Israel; but it represented also the condition of the nations generally, both of that and of succeeding times. There are many such valleys of dry bones in the age in which we live. The vast continents of the globe are full of such valleys; and they are to be found even in Christian lands, and some of them not far from where we dwell. “Son of man, can these bones live?” said God to the prophet; and he was afraid to answer, and said only, “O Lord God, Thou knowest.” And as we contemplate the outlying masses of society, the heathen nations of Africa and of Asia, the semi-infidel communities of Europe, and the godless multitudes of our own fair land—the question, Can they live? often and again falls upon our ear. And, oh! it is a momentous question, and were it not for the promises of the Gospel we should fear to give an affirmative reply. But what said the Lord to the prophet? “Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” And the prophet did so. And now there is a rustling in the valley. The dry bones move, and each bone seeks its fellow, until the skeletons of men are formed, and then the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and then the skin covers them. But do they live? No; as yet they are corpses, motionless and stiff. Man has done his part; but another agency must be at work ere these dead men live. And now the prophet is to prophecy again. But what

is he to say? He is not to speak to the dead bodies which now lie before him; but turning himself away from them, and lifting up his voice on high, he is to say, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, and they shall live!" Brethren, you know the sequel, and you can draw the consolatory lesson. It is the breath of the Spirit that gives life to nations dead in trespasses and sins, and, whilst the ambassadors of the Cross must go into the valleys and prophesy, they must plead for the Spirit of the living God, and must continually cry, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, and they shall live."

Let us then pray more earnestly than ever for the descent of the life-giving Spirit, and let us cultivate with diligence the life which the Spirit gives. We cannot originate life ourselves. Man can do many wonderful things, but he cannot give life to an insect or a plant, nor spiritual life to himself or to his fellow-men. But there are two things which he can do—he can destroy life, and he can nourish life. He can destroy life, for he can crush the worm that crawls beneath his feet, and he can slay the animal whose flesh he wants for food. He can nourish life, for he can train the fruit-trees in his garden, so that they shall become productive of richer fruit; he can feed his flocks and his herds, and thus fatten them for the slaughter; and he can take care of his own health, so that for a time, at least, disease and death may be warded from his person. But, brethren, a greater and a more mysterious power is in our hands. We may destroy the spiritual life which has been implanted within us, and thus become the prey of a second death, from which there will be no escape; and, on the other hand, we can cultivate that life so that it shall become more and more vigorous, more and more fruitful, more and more assimilated to the life of God. It is given us, indeed, for this purpose; and failing to cultivate it, we shall in fact destroy it, for it is like a flame, which, unless fed with air and fuel, will soon expire of itself. Let us, then, stir up the gift of God that is within us. Let us not yield for a moment to the spirit of sloth and inactivity; but let us live, *and live* for the grand end and purpose for which we were first made men, and have since been made Christians, for then shall we live indeed—for God, in God, with God, through the everlasting ages, even for evermore.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

OF all the gifts of God which man is capable of receiving, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the most valuable and important. Some aspire after gifts of genius—poetry, eloquence, and art ; and it is unquestionable that those who possess them possess the power to sway to a large extent the thoughts and the passions of their fellow-men. But, whilst such gifts may be cultivated when given, they are not to be obtained, especially in their highest form, by any efforts which man can put forth ; for they are bestowed by the sovereign will of the Creator, and on persons of different ranks and orders in society. Nor are they in themselves of the highest value, for unless sanctified by grace, they may be, as they often have been, perverted and abused, to the injury of thousands of the human race. Spiritual gifts are of much greater value, and these are to be coveted and sought, many of them being within the reach of all Christians, the poorest and the humblest not excepted. Faith, hope, charity, these are the gifts of the Spirit, and the last is the greatest of them all. “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” says St. Paul, meaning such gifts as will qualify you for your work in the family, in the church, in the world at large ; “and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.” And then he pours forth that wondrous hymn in praise of charity (1 Cor. xiii.), which has been and ever will be the admiration of the Church of Christ. Better than the best of gifts, than genius, learning, wealth, position in society, or any other benefit which man aspires to, is this gift of charity ; and he who gains it gains with it all other spiritual blessings, and is thus raised to a higher seat than was ever occupied by the kings and princes and potentates of the earth. Charity is love ; and it will endure when many other things which men are so eager to obtain will have perished for ever, and have passed away.

THORNLEY SMITH.

REASONS FOR GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

A SERMON

*Preached in the Wesleyan Chapel, Lambeth, on Good
Friday Morning, 1872.*

BY THE REV. JOHN RHODES (B).

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—GAL. vi. 14.

WHEN the apostle speaks of “the cross of Christ,” he speaks of the death of Christ; and when he speaks of the death of Christ, he speaks of it as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. That doctrine which lies at the foundation of all his teaching is, that sinners are reconciled to God through the death of His Son. In other words, if God forgives the sins of men, it is not for the sake of anything they have done, or can do; but solely in consideration of what His Son Jesus has done and suffered for them upon the cross. This is the apostle’s doctrine—the doctrine in which he glories, and to which the text refers.

But this doctrine has always excited much enmity. The Jews were exceedingly mad against it, and they violently persecuted those who ventured to proclaim it. It was to them “a stumblingblock,” “and to the Greeks foolishness;” but that which was a “stumblingblock” to some and “foolishness” to others, was that in which the apostle

gloried most. It must also be noted that this doctrine—abjuring, as it does, all trust in good works, in religious observances, or in anything else except the atoning efficacy of Christ's blood for the forgiveness of sins—was highly offensive to some who were professedly *in*, as well as to those who were outside the Church. You cannot read the Acts or the Epistles without seeing that there were in the days of the Apostle Paul certain men who went about teaching, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (Acts xv. 1.) These men occasioned the apostle a great deal of trouble. They followed him from place to place, and not unfrequently undid to a great extent what he had done. They went into Galatia, for example, where the apostle had been very successful in winning souls to Christ, and there they wrought great mischief. They insinuated that Paul was not an apostle. He had not been ordained by the imposition of hands—he was not, therefore, in the apostolic succession; he was an enthusiastic layman who had run before he was sent. Now, *they* had come from Peter, and James, and John, the chosen apostles of Christ, who could speak with greater authority than anyone else; and the tenor of their teaching was that *there was no salvation out of the Jewish Church*. It was as necessary for them to observe the ceremonial law, as it was for them to repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was in consequence of these misrepresentations and false doctrines that St. Paul was inspired to write the epistle which is now before us. You will observe that in the opening chapter he begins by boldly asserting his apostolic authority: "Paul, an apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." In the eleventh and twelfth verses he says, "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." In the second

chapter he refers to the council—or, as it is there called, the “conference”—which was held in Jerusalem on this very question; and to the decision of that conference, which was to the effect that the Gentiles were under no obligation to be circumcised, and that he (Paul) ought to be recognised as the Apostle of the Gentiles, quite as fully as Peter was recognised as the Apostle of the Jews. He next proceeds to establish the doctrine that “man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith.” It was never intended that the Gentile followers of Christ should be burdened with the yoke of ceremonies, and therefore he exhorts them to “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” “Behold, I Paul say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” In the verses immediately preceding the text he declares that the zeal of those ritualistic teachers was to be accounted for on two grounds—viz., pride and fear. They desired “to make a fair show in the flesh,” and they feared “lest they should suffer persecution.” For these reasons they gloried in the law. “But God forbid,” he says, “that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is as though he had said, “There is nothing in this world that I count worth living for, but to preach Christ and Him crucified. It shall be the one purpose of my life to point sinners to ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ I know what Ritualism is. I understand it thoroughly. ‘If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee.’ Nevertheless, I declare unto you that by the works of the law

this doctrine, we glory in it. It is the ground of our only hope, and it shall be the subject of our only boast.

I WILL NOW STATE A FEW REASONS WHY WE GLORY IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1. We glory in the cross because *it is the only doctrine by which we can understand the Scriptures*. We look upon this Book (the Bible) as a revelation from God. It is generally admitted that in all matters pertaining to life and godliness this is our only authoritative guide. Now, if it can be shown that the doctrine of the Cross (as already explained) is the one doctrine of this inspired Book, that you cannot take it away without destroying the unity of the Bible and making it unintelligible and of no saving effect, I think you will see that in this doctrine we have whereof to glory.

Well, now, what saith the Scripture? If you turn to the book of Genesis (Chapter iv.), you will there find an account of the offerings which were presented to the Lord by Cain and Abel. "Cain brought of the fruits of the ground;" "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." Here, then, at the very commencement of human history, we find the institution of sacrifice, and a clear indication of God's approval of it. He who presented a mere thank-offering was rejected, but he who approached the mercy-seat through the blood of an innocent victim was accepted. The book of Genesis teaches further, that during the whole period of the patriarchal dispensation, those who feared the Lord were in the habit of offering sacrifices. How came that about? And what did those sacrifices teach?

If you turn to the books of Exodus and Leviticus, you cannot fail to be struck with the fact that the Mosaic dispensation was but a further development of the same religious idea. On the night of the Passover, when the destroying angel went forth to slay the first-born in the land of Egypt,

those families only were saved whose houses were sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb. And on the great day of atonement the children of Israel were most impressively taught this one lesson—that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” But that which arrests our attention still more strikingly is this: Every now and then we meet with a passage that distinctly points to that future Sacrifice, of which all other sacrifices were but the shadows or types. The prophet Isaiah, for instance, when speaking of the promised Messiah, says: “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. liii. 4-6.)

Now, what is the meaning of all this? How did the idea of sacrifice originate? How came it to pass that from the earliest period of human history the doctrine should be taught that sin demanded an atonement, and that that atonement must be by the shedding of innocent blood? Above all, how shall we account for this mystery, that there are distinct predictions in the Old Testament of One who, in the fulness of time, should make His soul an offering for sin, and by the sacrifice of Himself should become the divinely-constituted Saviour of mankind?

Let us come to the New Testament. Here we find those mysteries very largely explained. Both the Gospels and the Epistles reveal to us the fact that “the law was the shadow of good things to come.” All those sacrifices which were offered under the Patriarchal and Levitical Dispensations were typical of that one sacrifice which was made by Jesus Christ. Hence, when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he exclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

world!" Hence, too, Jesus Himself, when He partook of the Passover with His disciples, said, "Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you." Also, when He took the cup, and gave it to them, He said, "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The Apostle Paul tells us that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." St. John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." And St. Peter says, "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." If, therefore, you take away this doctrine from the Bible, you might as well take away the whole Book. It forms the sum and substance of Divine revelation. All the lines of history, all the lines of prophecy, all the lines of promise, meet in the cross of Christ as their great centre. Without that this precious Book would lose all its significance; it would be the most enigmatical book in the world; we could no longer regard it as a revelation from God.

2. *We glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is the only doctrine which satisfactorily explains to us the way of salvation.*

No plan of salvation can be satisfactory to us which does not come to us with Divine authority. It is not for guilty sinners like you and me to say on what grounds God might, could, would, or should forgive sins. Those grounds must be stated by God Himself. Now I have already shown that we have the authority of Holy Scripture for believing that God is able and willing to forgive sins in consideration of the death of His Son. But what authority can be quoted in favour of any other Gospel?

It is an easy thing for any man to say that God is too good to punish, and that because He delighteth in mercy, He will ultimately forgive and save us all. But in opposition to this statement we can urge the fact that God does punish, and we

have His own repeated declarations to the effect that *He will punish*. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

It is an easy thing for any man to say that *God will forgive sinners on the ground of their repentance*. But here again we have mere assertion without proof. We grant that no man can be saved without repentance, but to say that God will accept a man's repentance as *an atonement* for transgression, and as the ground therefore of that man's justification, is to speak without the Book. However congenial it may be to some minds to think that they can merit the forgiveness of their sins by their humble and penitent confession of sin, we cannot see how such a thought can bring satisfaction or peace to any mind so long as that thought does not come from God.

The same remark will apply to the statement that *God will forgive sinners on the ground of their future obedience to His law*. Of all such teachers we have the right to ask, "By what authority say ye these things, and who gave you this authority?" In such a matter as that of salvation, we want something more than mere assertion and probability; we can find satisfaction in nothing less than "Thus saith the Lord."

Again, no plan of salvation can be satisfactory that does not harmonise with the attributes, perfections, and glories of God's nature and character. If it could be shown that the plan of salvation through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ was inconsistent with the truth, or justice, or goodness of God, we could not rest in it. But such is not the case. We are prepared to show that it is in perfect harmony with all that we know of God, either from His works or from His Word. The glory of the Gospel which Paul preached consists in this: it shows that "God can be just whilst He is the Justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus." Had the apostle taught that God is pleased *arbitrarily* to forgive the sins of men, that He requires no atonement whatsoever, we should

have said that that would be inconsistent with God's holiness, inasmuch as it would give endless encouragement to vice. On the other hand, if the apostle had taught that God was so exacting as to demand the payment of our debt in full, and that, therefore, Jesus Christ suffered as much in His own person as all mankind deserved to suffer, and as all will suffer who die in sin, we should have said that that was impossible in itself, and inconsistent with the Divine mercy; for how could Jesus Christ suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire?" And if He suffered the penalty for sin *in full*, what room was left for the *forgiveness* of sin? But when the apostle teaches that the temporary sufferings of the Son of God are accepted conditionally (the conditions being repentance and faith), instead of the eternal sufferings of those who otherwise would have been without forgiveness, we see justice and mercy beautifully combined; and we can appreciate the statement of the psalmist, that "righteousness and peace have kissed each other." But, as thus much cannot be affirmed of any other plan of salvation than that which is spoken of in the text, we say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. *We glory in this doctrine, because of its blessed effects upon individuals, and upon society at large.*

It was objected to this doctrine when it was first proclaimed that it would lead to Antinomianism. Men would say, "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound." And that is the common objection which is urged against it at this day. But the answer of the apostle is, that so far is this doctrine from making void the law, that "it establishes the law." A true faith in the atoning efficacy of the Saviour's death will as certainly bring forth good works as a good tree will bring forth good fruit.

What effect does the doctrine of the Cross produce upon the sinner's mind? Does it not give him to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Does it not teach that sin is so great

an evil in the sight of God, that nothing less than the sufferings and death of His incarnate Son could be accepted as a sufficient ground on which He might exercise His mercy? And does it not serve to impress this one thought upon him, that if he trample under foot the blood of Christ, by rejecting for himself the atonement of Christ, his damnation will be just? I confess to you, my brethren, that if I am ever tempted to doubt the doctrine of future punishment, my doubts on that subject are effectually dispelled when I come to the foot of the Cross. It is there that I see the estimate which God puts upon sin. It seems to me that there is nothing which is so directly calculated to produce a fear of sin and a hatred to sin as an appreciative view of the Cross of Christ.

What effect does this doctrine produce upon the believer's mind? Does it not give him to see the greatness of God's love to him? How is it possible for any man believingly to contemplate that wondrous display of love and mercy which is presented in the atoning death of Christ, without being led to exclaim—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!”

There is nothing more natural than for true believers to say, “We love Him, because He first loved us!” And for this reason we affirm most confidently that—

Faith in the cross of Christ is the one effective remedy for the sins of the world. It destroys all desire to sin by begetting a hatred to sin. More than that; it excites within the breast of the believer such an enthusiastic love to Christ, that the Spirit of Christ takes possession of him, and he immediately gains power over sin. He ceases to do evil; he learns to do well. Love to Christ becomes his ruling passion. To show his love to Jesus; to please and imitate Jesus; and

finally to be with Jesus, and to see Him as He is, becomes the chief desire of his heart, the great aim of his life. Again, therefore, we exclaim, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us ask, What would be the effect upon individuals, and upon society at large if the cross of Christ were to be withdrawn? Here is a man who says that he is miserable on account of sin. His cry is, "What must I do to be saved?" What are we to say to him if we cannot point him "to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world?"

Here is a man who says: "I should like to lead a good life, but I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me?" What shall we say to that man if we cannot point him to the cross of Christ? if we cannot tell him of the all-conquering power which springs up in the heart through faith in Jesus Christ?

Here is a man in trouble. He has lost a wife or a child. His heart is bleeding under sore bereavement. He stands in great need of consolation. What shall we say to him if we cannot speak to him about Jesus? if we cannot point him to the cross and to the sepulchre, to Him who died on Calvary, but who on the third day rose again from the dead, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers?

Thank God, "the old, old story" has lost none of its attractive or consoling power: and it has a greater hold upon the throbbing heart of our poor humanity to-day than it ever had before. Never did we foresee so clearly as we can to-day the fulfilment of those prophetic words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Where is the man to whom this Gospel has been preached who has not felt the attractive influence of the cross? Is there a man or woman here who has not felt it? No. You have felt it in the quietude of your own chamber; you have felt it in the

common walks of life ; you have felt it on the bed of sickness ; you have felt it as you have stood by the open grave ; you have felt it again and again when you have called to your remembrance the triumphant shout of those loved ones, who, when they were passing through the dark valley of death, were heard to exclaim, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" May I not say that you feel it *now*? Then *yield* to it now. God forbid that you should offer any resistance to it. Some of you have resisted it for many years. Resist no longer. Let your language be—

"Nay, but I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more ;
I sink, by dying love compelled,
And own Thee Conqueror."

Give yourselves no rest until you can say, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."





REV. DANIEL SANDERSON.

CHRISTIAN JOY.

A SERMON

*Delivered in the Mostyn Road Wesleyan Chapel, on Sunday
Morning, March 17, 1872.*

BY THE REV. DANIEL SANDERSON.

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks : for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”—1 THESS. v. 16-18.

GENERAL experience of the world will, probably, lead most minds to think, at first sight, that these words were never intended to be literally understood; and that the apostle simply means that we are to endeavour to be happy, and indulge a spirit of gratitude. And we know from experience that one of the greatest objections made against the religion of the Bible is, that it deprives people of their natural high spirits and cheerfulness, and has a tendency to make them gloomy and melancholy. Those who have had the deepest experience of the things of God, know that this objection is raised only by persons who have no acquaintance with spiritual religion, who seek no further than the things of this life for happiness, and who believe that everything that can be enjoyed is to be enjoyed in this life. But I think we must all admit that the conduct of the majority of professing Christians, in falling far short of the blessedness provided for them in the Gospel, has given very much too good ground for this objection; and therefore we find, when we press the claims of religion upon the minds of vain and worldly-

mind persons, and especially of young people, that those claims are met with repugnance, because of the unloveliness of religion in many of its professors.

Now for the comfort of true believers, and to cut off all occasion from those who desire occasion against the reception of the Gospel, we will this morning consider, *First*, the nature of Christian joy; *secondly*, its source; *thirdly*, its extent; and *lastly*, the best means of maintaining it. Let us consider—

I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN JOY. Now joy in general is that cheerful affection of the soul which arises from the possession or hope of good. Mirth and hilarity, the outward expressions of joy, are often heard where the power of Christ's grace has never been felt. The possession or hope of good gladdens many a heart and many a countenance that drop the moment you mention spiritual religion. In the gay assembly, in the dance, in the ball-room and the theatre, in the pathway of pleasure, what light hearts and merry countenances are seen; even the haunts of vice and sin often ring with the most boisterous merriment. The domestic circle where God is not found abounds with delight, and the associations of friends under any circumstances yield a great degree of pleasure. But you will see in a moment that the pleasure arising from these sources is altogether carnal; it is godless; and what is fatal to it as a means of happiness is, that it depends entirely, both for its continuance and its existence, upon the uncertain and perpetually changing circumstances and relations of the world; whereas Christian joy is that cheerful affection of the soul which arises from the possession of present and the certainty of future good. The one is from the earth, earthy; the other is from heaven. The one endures but for a time; the other is perpetually increasing to all eternity.

Now let us consider,

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS JOY. That God designs the happiness of all His creatures is perfectly clear from both His works and His Word. When we look around upon creation, we see every individual of the innumerable species of animated nature admirably adapted to its station, and furnished with the means of enjoyment. God has thus manifestly designed that all His creatures should be happy. The earth, and the air that surrounds the earth, and the water, are literally crowded with hosts of happy creatures dependent every moment upon the sustaining hand of God, and every moment kept by Him in a state of enjoyment. The joy which these animals have, results entirely from a right use of the powers with which the Almighty has endowed them.

In addition to the animal gratifications designed for man as well as other creatures, God designed for us spiritual happiness, a happiness as far transcending the pleasure of mere animal gratification as heaven transcends earth. He has furnished us with spiritual faculties, the right use of which would bring down to earth the delights of heaven. Created in the image of God, in His moral perfection, in knowledge, in holiness, in happiness, and in immortality, regarded with complacency by his Maker, conscious of his filial relation to God, enjoying hourly communion with Him, and having set before him the hope of yet unrevealed glory, the first man experienced a kind and degree of happiness that has never been experienced since. But let us never forget that all the happiness that he enjoyed in his perfect state resulted simply and solely from the right use of his faculties. Love and gratitude and holy obedience were nothing more than the appropriate exercise of the faculties with which he was endowed; and in that exercise he was perfectly happy. But this happiness was entirely lost through sin. Harkening to the seductive voice of Satan, man ceased to love, ceased to obey; he suspected the goodness of God who made him,

and therefore fell into misery, lost the filial relation, lost the Spirit of God, separated himself from communion with Him, and plunged himself into the deepest misery.

Now it is in this state of misery that you and I—for let us bring the matter home to ourselves without any choice on our part whatever—were born ; we cannot help ourselves ; we have been born into the world in a state of sin, guilt, and misery, into which we were plunged with the whole race by the sin of Adam. We are subject to innumerable evils, that affect both body and soul, in time and to all eternity. And yet it is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, that we should always be happy, that we should always be thankful. In other words, the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus has provided a complete remedy for all the evil brought upon us by the sin of Adam, has re-opened the original source of holy joy, and restored to us the forfeited privilege, and urges us now to avail ourselves of it.

To be more particular, you and I are charged with innumerable sins, in thought, in word, and in deed ; and we are guilty before God ; but He has provided for the removal of our guilt : the Lord hath laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. In consequence of Adam's sin our every thought is evil and corrupt, our hearts are inclined only to evil, and that continually ; but God hath opened in the house of David a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. In consequence of this guilt and this depravity we are all alienated from God ; but He hath so arranged, without any effort on our part, and without derogation of His holiness, that we who are afar off may be brought nigh by the blood of Christ. In consequence of this guilt, and depravity, and alienation, we are strangers to the family of God, we have no present substantial good, and we have no sufficiently-grounded hope for the future. But God has provided for this also by the offer of a full and free salvation unto us all. This is our crown of

rejoicing, but let us not forget that a Christian only can enjoy this.

Now by a Christian we are to understand not merely one who has been baptized into the name of Christ. We know perfectly well by our own experience, and by the observation of others around us, that there are thousands upon thousands who have been baptized, and yet are in fact mere heathens. By a Christian we understand one who has so believed in Christ that his sin has been pardoned, and he rejoices to know that the old enmity is completely done away, and that now he is in the favour of God. Whereas formerly the wrath of God impended over his head, now the light of God's countenance is lifted up upon him, and he can rejoice in a pardoning God. By a Christian we understand one who has so believed that he has become a new creature in Christ Jesus, has power over sin, and walks in holiness of life from day to day by the "strength which God supplies through His eternal Son." By a Christian we are to understand one who, though once an alien, is now a son of God, and who, because he is a son, may look up unto God and cry, "Abba, Father," the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. By a Christian we are to understand one who has been saved in Christ; and it is true that whereas he was once without God and without hope, now God dwells in him and he in God, and he has a hope blooming with eternal life. "Blessed," indeed, "is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Let us consider,

III. THE EXTENT OF THIS JOY. You will observe from the language of the text, which we must not qualify, that we are to rejoice at all times and under all circumstances; and, strange as that may appear, it is the will of God in Christ

Jesus that it should be so. But this is one of those paradoxes which the world cannot possibly understand. Do what they will, the world cannot be continually happy and cheerful. Look at a man plunging himself into business during the day. How he forgets everything else, himself even, and seems to have all his faculties occupied, and to be happy in the pursuit. Does there come no time of weariness? Has he no anxiety, and losses, and troubles, and trials? Look at the votary of pleasure. As you all know by experience, the day of pleasure is the hardest day of your life. What must it be, then, for those who are pursuing pleasure day after day, and year after year? What, simply, but the literal fulfilment of the words of Scripture, "She is dead while she liveth?" The hardest of all pursuits is the pursuit of pleasure; and, as one very justly said, not many years ago, "this world would be a comfortable place, if it were not for its pleasures." There is a great deal of real truth in that. And yet, after all, the world claims a kind of monopoly for gladness; and least of all will the world allow the Christian to have any pleasure. They look down with contempt upon a Christian; they may admire him as a man, who, under a practical delusion, gives up all pleasure in this life in a vain and foolish vision of pleasure to come in another life; they may admire the man's self-denial, but they look upon him as a fanatic, as one under a sad delusion, and an object of pity. The world always takes it for granted that religion makes a man miserable. But the difference between the pleasure of the world and the pleasure of the Christian is just something like this: the pleasure of the world is like a mountain torrent in the time of a thunder-storm, rolling and rushing down with impetuosity, but speedily leaving the high rock for the muddy bed; whereas the Christian's joy is like a stream which flows continually, silent, but deep, and silent because it is deep. It goes flowing on, fertilising the world; and no obstacles can interrupt or break its course.

But let us just consider a few of those things which are generally considered destructive of cheerfulness. First, there is *poverty*. None of us like to be poor. We are all, day after day, trying to be saved from poverty, if we are afflicted by it; and its effect very frequently, though not always, is, to make persons discontented with their lot, and envious of those who possess abundance. I say sometimes, because you will find happier people in cottages very often, than in palaces; and you will see happier faces in even the courts and alleys of London than in Rotten-row and other places like it. Happiness is very much more evenly distributed than people generally believe. While poverty is not in itself a blessing, it may be sanctified through us and blessed; but it is never represented in Scripture as a blessing. Some of the best Christians I have seen in my life were those who had so little of this world's goods that they had hardly enough from day to day to satisfy their wants. But the Christian does not live by bread alone. He is not dependent upon that for his happiness, and in times of the severest poverty he can say, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." We know there are many men who are described as poor in the Scriptures, who are rich in earthly goods.

Then there is *adversity*, and we see some terrible instances of adversity. We see men, more, perhaps, than at any other period of this country's history, plunged from the height of affluence to the very depths of poverty. And what is the effect generally? Upon some the effect is so completely to overbalance the mind, that suicide is committed. And where it does not proceed so far, how many intellects are weakened by it! How often do we hear it said, "Ah! poor fellow; he has never looked up since such and such a thing!" How many lamentable instances do we see of this kind. Men put their confidence for happiness in their wealth, which often

takes to itself wings and flies away as an eagle towards heaven, to be seen no more. This is not the case with a man who does not depend upon things in this life for happiness; he can say with one of old, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls;" or, as we should say now, "Although the blight should destroy every ear of corn in the field, and though the plague should take off every head of cattle I have;" "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Then there is *affliction*. To this we are all liable. We are apt to look upon our own affliction, and not upon the affliction of the world. We say sometimes in the language of Scripture, but certainly perverting its meaning, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." We might just as easily and as truly say, "Many are the afflictions of the wicked." But of the righteous it is said, "The Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked." Let us not as Christians dwell upon our own afflictions as if Christians only were afflicted. It is a great mistake to suppose the balance of happiness is against the Christian, even in this life. Affliction, unless it is sanctified, generally speaking, has the effect of making men miserable and discontented. The true Christian knows that it is the wise discipline of a loving Father. He knows that the afflictions which are brought upon him are permitted and designed to bring him nearer to God; and, therefore, in the time of severe affliction he can look up unto God with perfect confidence. It is wonderful what religion will do if we get enough of it. Oh! I have seen some persons in such affliction as would harrow your souls, and make you shudder, if I were to describe it, who were as happy as men can be on earth in the body. The power of religion will overcome any

amount of pain, sorrow, and suffering, if we only have enough of it. In the time of the most painful bereavement or other personal or domestic affliction, the Christian can say, through the power of religion within him, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He is happy under all circumstances.

Well, then, there is *persecution*. Now none of us like to be persecuted, and, thank God, we have very little of it in the present day. We can worship God according to our own conscience; we are not liable even as our immediate forefathers were to the scorn and derision heaped upon the followers of Christ. It is a great mercy, and one which we ought to improve and be thankful for. But persecution will come, and they who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution in one way or another. "Ay," you say, "suffer it; but is a man to rejoice in it? Is he to rejoice when his name is cast out as evil? Is a man to be deeply grateful when he is accounted as filth and scum? Is he to be joyful when he is deprived of his property, and when he is deprived of what is more precious to him, his reputation?" Nay, he is not merely to bear all this, but he is to *rejoice* in it; and the true Christian does so, as the apostle says, "Ye.... took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The Christian knows that it is the cross more than anything else that conforms him to Christ our Lord, and he rejoices to bear it. He is exceedingly joyful in all his tribulation; he knows the kingdom of God is to be reached through much tribulation, and therefore he rejoices in it.

But now, let us consider—

IV. THE BEST MEANS OF MAINTAINING THIS CHRISTIAN CHEERFULNESS. You will naturally ask how it is possible for a man to be always rejoicing. How is it possible for him in every circumstance to give thanks?

I imagine some of you thinking there are people in the world whose circumstances are such that they can always be happy, and that our text cannot be applied to every person. I can imagine some of you here this morning saying to yourselves, "Well, it is a great blessing that some people can do so; but if the preacher only knew my trials, if he knew the trials I have at home, if he knew the difficulties I have in my business, if he knew the losses and disappointments and afflictions I suffer, he would make some allowance for me." But the Word of God makes none, and it is for your happiness that it makes none; and let us apply to everyone here the words of our text, "Rejoice evermore. In everything give thanks."

One of the first means of being happy is *to reflect* upon your grounds for happiness. What is religion? The very design of religion is to banish all unhappiness from this world of ours; and you may take it as a certain truth, that you will be happy exactly in proportion to the effect of religion upon your heart. It is very justly said there are many people who have not enough of religion to be happy, and yet have too much of it to enjoy the world, so that they really sit down between two stools. Now if you want to be happy, get religion thoroughly fixed in your heart: the more you have of it the happier you will be. God is the sole fountain of joy, and the nearer you live to Him, the purer your delight will be. Let no remissness in diligence of spirit for a single moment hinder your communion with God. "Rejoice *evermore*; pray *without ceasing*; in *everything* give thanks;" and then you will be continually happy.

Mark every mercy. This you will find a very important means of happiness. There are multitudes of persons who receive mercies day by day, moment by moment, without one expression of thankfulness. Get the habit of marking the mercies of God, and this will enable you to "rejoice evermore."

Read the Word of God. Lest you should think there is something peculiar in your case, take the one Book, and read where it refers to this one thing. It is good to read the Word of God consecutively, but it is also good when a certain subject occupies your mind to see what the Word of God says about it, what its testimony is. Now let us consider the example you have in the Word of God, and see if there is anything peculiar in your condition to prevent you from rejoicing evermore. Let me ask you, Were you ever bereaved of your property? Were you ever afflicted in your body with a loathesome disease, so that none of your friends would come near you? Were you ever afflicted as Job was? There is not one of us who has had anything like his affliction; and yet see what the power of religion was in Job's case. He was not like many people of these days. They say that time does wonders; and that in time a wound will heal, whether it be loss, or bereavement, or affliction, or aught else; time will be a healing balm. In other words, men forget their trials and troubles. But Job did not act thus. In the midst of his prosperity, when he was the greatest man in the East, everything was taken from him, and he was afflicted with a loathesome disease. And what was the effect of religion in him? Simply this, he merely praised God: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Religion is just the same now as in Job's day. Only, I say, get enough of it, let your hearts be filled with it, and you will be enabled in your trouble and affliction thus to speak with Job. Were you ever tried as David was? And he says, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." How does He exhort us to rejoice in God? Were you ever persecuted as the apostles were? You have a remarkable instance in them. They were brought up after our Lord's resurrection, and publicly flogged. For what? Simply

believing in God. And they departed from the council rejoicing. *Rejoicing!* What had they to rejoice at? Their character had not been vindicated; they had not won the cause. They rejoiced, departing from the council, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. I am very much afraid if any of us had such affliction as this, we should go to our friends for sympathy, perhaps write to *The Times*; and the whole country from one end to the other might ring with the injustice; whereas the apostles, a higher class of men, went from the council rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ.

Depend upon it, the wisest thing to do under all affliction is to be happy. We have a remarkable case in Paul and Silas. I know nothing more remarkable in the whole Scriptures than their history. You remember Paul and Silas went about preaching the Gospel, and one night in a vision Paul dreamed a man from Macedonia said, "Come over and help us;" and Paul, in his zeal and earnestness, but many would say, in his foolishness, concluded the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel there; and they immediately took ship, and went over to Macedonia; and they found the Lord had called them to get a public flogging there. They were flogged, and thrust into the innermost prison, and their feet were made fast in the stocks. Now, just examine yourselves, and say what you would have done under those circumstances. I am afraid there are many in this day who would have thought they had missed their providential path, and have taken very good care to get back again as soon as possible, and have resolved never to attend to dreams and visions any more. That would be the effect, I believe, in multitudes of instances now. Paul and Silas were of a higher type of being, and therefore, though they were so grievously punished when they believed they were doing God's bidding, they prayed and sang praises to God. The

prisoners heard them; and the jailer was converted. What was the effect? Christianity was introduced then for the first time to Europe; and from that hour what a blessing has come! How many there were of whom the world was not worthy, who, under the most trying tortures men could possibly inflict, rejoiced and blessed the name of the Lord.

One of the best means of preserving this Christian cheerfulness is to consider the *design of affliction*. What is the purpose of it? It is to bring us nearer to God; it is to make us partakers of the Divine nature, to make us more like God, to bring us into closer communion and fellowship with Him. That is the design of it; and whoever preserves the sense of this in every affliction, will be able then to rejoice and bless the name of the Lord. Never forget the apostle instituted a sort of comparison, or connection, between the sufferings and the happiness of believers: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." "If children," says the apostle, "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

What I want, my dear fellow-Christians, this morning, is that we should be happier Christians than we have been; that we should let our light shine, and show to the world there is nothing like religion for happiness; thus, instead of being a stumblingblock in the way of the world, teaching them to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Let me say to all the young people here this morning, that the happiest thing in the world is religion; but you must give your hearts thoroughly to God, and make religion the

business of life, or else you will fail. Wherever there is true religion fixed in the heart, a man can rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks. Oh! I could tell you many instances that have come under my own observation of those who, in the midst of trial and suffering, have been enabled to rejoice and bless the name of the Lord.

Let me exhort you to anticipate the period "when the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." As the last word, let me remind you, that, whatever you may think as to the possibility or the impracticability of this, it is your own fault if you are not rejoicing evermore, because the God of love has made full provision in Christ our Lord.



ABEL'S SACRIFICE.

A SERMON

*Preached in Caledonian Road Wesleyan Chapel, on Sunday
Evening, March 17, 1872.*

BY THE REV. JOHN RATTENBURY.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”—HEBREWS XI. 4.

THESE words may well make us think of time, its changes, its rapid flights, its generations, time future, and time past. We deal with the past this evening. We leap in rapid thought from this generation of living, active, thoughtful men, far back, probably to the time when there were not so many families upon earth as there are now gathered in this house. We go back to the first family, and consider its startling history, and its mournful developments of the apostasy of our first parents. This household is a kind of type of most families upon earth, showing in one person grace received, and in another grace resisted. One of a house is found good, another bad; one yielding to the influences of the Spirit, another yielding to unhallowed temper and to sin; one dying as a saint in the faith, and another dying under the curse of God. Such is the mournful history of human families.

We are not about to take the dark side of the history before us; but the passage upon which we shall attempt to dwell gives us rather the side of hope, as it furnishes to us one of the clearest and most graphic views of the way to Divine acceptance, the way to Divine favour and reward. The chapter before us, as a whole, is remarkable for its one great leading thought, namely, that the good, from the first

believer, Abel, through every succeeding time and age, have attained to their goodness by one means, by the recognition of one great revealed principle, by a living faith in God. We conceive that that was the prominent reason for the writing of this chapter, which gives to us an enumeration of some of the most prominent men that had lived in all times, in order to show that their worthiness, their holiness, their honour, their power, all proceeded from this living, penitent apprehension of the Divine Redeemer, even the trust of their hearts in Him. This thought will be brought out further in the more circumstantial allusion in the passage before us. The apostle introduces the two brothers, Cain and Abel, and he says that Abel "by faith offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Now here is a positive statement of the superiority of Abel's offering to that of his elder brother. In what did this superiority consist? We shall show it partly from the passage before us, and observe—

I. THAT HIS SACRIFICE WAS OFFERED IN CONFORMITY TO THE DIVINE WILL. He "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." The principle of sacrifice, is to be traced from the beginning after the apostasy. We have scarcely an intimation of the first revelation of God to man. The oft-quoted promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, declared the grace of the method of human acceptance after Adam and his wife had forfeited the Divine favour and been excluded from Paradise. The infinite wisdom of God in arranging for this method of restoration for expelled man we may not now enter upon. But the principle that runs through the entire Scripture—the line of glory everywhere—is that guilty, fallen man should be recovered and restored by the shedding of blood. Men may question the types, and speak of the Omniscient shedding the blood of a lamb, or a goat, or a calf; but it is enough that such things were significant allusions to the one sacrifice to be made at the end of the world, and declared the one way of personal salvation. Now here it was that the superiority of Abel's offering to Cain's appeared.

Let us deal fairly with Cain. There are many men worse than he was up to a certain time. It is evident that he was

a man who gave himself to public worship ; for he did make an offering to God. The passage we have just read to you says that he brought of the fruit of the ground. He was by no means an infidel. There are thousands of men in our own day who have more of the mark of the beast upon them than he had. There was a fear of God, with a willingness to present an offering to the Lord. One would think he was a somewhat respectable religionist, and had delight in his respectability, desiring everything to be done in order. He was the firstborn man, and might glory in his strong arms, in his vigorous intellect, in his skilful culture of the ground, in the rich and luxurious fruits that he could bring as a present to the Lord. He was generous enough. If you take mere money value, perhaps his offering of the fruit of the ground was equal to the lambs that Abel brought ; but he was a formal religionist, who gloried in human nature, though he did not fail to acknowledge his God and present an offering to Him.

And why was not he accepted ? Because there was the one great weakness or failure, which you find not in the case of his younger brother, that he had no sense of sin. There was no feeling of the pride and malice which must have been there, for they were soon hurried into murder, or of the jealousy and envy of the carnal or fallen nature. He was respectable enough ; but there was in him a heart dead in trespasses and sins ; and he felt no need of a Saviour. There was no call for him with his sense of form and dignity and order and worship, to weep for fear of destruction, and prostrate himself before the Lord. But in the case of the younger brother you have all this. Indeed, the excellence of Abel's sacrifice was, that that sacrifice did take cognisance of some distinct and special method of saving ; it was a virtual confession of faith. "I do, by the shedding of the blood of this beast, the first lamb I could find of all my flock, I do show that I have no power in myself to conquer my sins, that I am a poor, weak, fallen, corrupted son of fallen parents ; and I feel the sin that has been generated in me by their apostasy, pride, corruption, and earthly-mindedness, and the wrath of God that rests upon me because of my birth in sin. I feel all this, and that no power of restoration, or of return to God lies in me ; but I do confess, by the building of this altar and the

slaying of this victim, that I believe in the promise of God made in Paradise, that the seed of the woman in some mystic, distant day—God's own Son incarnated—shall shed His blood for my sins; and I trust in that blood-shedding for a poor guilty sinner, as the only ground for my pardon, my standing free with my God, and my entrance again into the Paradise which my father lost."

Brethren, that is the principle. Understand what is the character of your offering. If there be not regard for this bleeding Lamb, it is mere formalism. You may have it as perfect and fair and full, as artistic and correct as human taste or tongues can make it; but if there be no broken heart, no confession, no conviction of sin, no faith in God's anointed Son the Divine Redeemer, there is no hope of life, no acceptance with God. This must be; for without this, man's offering is vain, and is more likely to bring Divine displeasure than the favour of God.

It is true that the position of this object of faith was as to Abel very different from its position as to us. He had to look up the vista of time, four thousand years or more, and saw in that dim distance a promise which was to be fulfilled in the seed of the woman. His was a wonderful faith. Not one had exercised such faith before. He was the first man that ever tried this new road to favour and to heaven. It was like walking in a solitary path for the young man to begin and shed the blood of a victim, and believe that by confessing and acknowledging the coming of God's Son four thousand years after, he should receive a new nature, and stand in the favour of his God. It was a wonderful act of faith.

We look back to the same Christ two thousand years; but then the two thousand years are without a break. Every backward step gives us its history and example in living, believing men—men of all kinds and characters, who looked to Christ and were saved. The road to Calvary is crowded now with the evidence of thousands and myriads in heaven and on earth, who can testify that a living, penitent faith in Christ saves a man for ever. You must have it. This faith made the superiority of the offering of this young worshipper. Cain's was as fairly spoken, perhaps, and it seemed almost more than his brother's. Everything was right but one, and that one thing was all. Without that one thing, the trust of

the heart in Jesus, everything else is vain. Oratory, worth, psalmody, multitudes, beauty, nature, are all vain, empty, vapid, valueless, till a man comes with a contrite heart to the foot of the Cross as a guilty, weak, helpless worm. "No hope for me but at Jesu's feet." Till a man comes there, all else is vain. Have *you* been there? Are you there? What sort of an offering have you brought to God's house to-night?—most like Cain's or most like Abel's, which? Have you brought a proud heart or a broken heart? Have you brought an envious spirit or a loving spirit? Have you brought mere curiosity, or, "Who knows but God may meet me there?" Have you brought a fervent yearning concern to find Jesus, and offer yourselves, your hearts, your all to Him? If you have, and will make the offering in the spirit and with the faith of Abel you will be treated as he was by your God; you shall find mercy. God help you to come thus.

II. TAKE THE THOUGHT, THAT THIS SUPERIORITY OF FAITH BROUGHT TO ABEL TESTIMONY OF THE DIVINE FAVOUR. "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." This is remarkable. New Testament times and records and experiences have brought out the meaning of this verse. We speak familiarly, perhaps sometimes thoughtlessly and carelessly, of the gift and power, the action and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. There are distinct references here to the Trinity: "God;" to the sacrifice: "Christ;" to the testimony of God the Holy Ghost: "he obtained witness." It is fair to observe, in regard to this testimony from heaven to the young man's faith, that it is possible there was a visible sign. You find in Old Testament history that God did frequently show His approbation of the accepted sacrifice by sending down fire from heaven, or a sudden fall of light and glory in some peculiar, but bright and blessed form. It is fair to presume that those early and patriarchal descendings of fire in recognition of the Divine favour were emblematic of the Holy Ghost. You find at the day of Pentecost that there appeared cloven tongues as of fire. In Abel's case the visible sign was followed by and allied with the spiritual, the saving entrance of God the Holy Ghost. We believe the spiritual sign was the testimony of the Spirit to his heart. Most likely what

offended Cain was, that there was no response to his basket of fruit, but that when the blood of Abel's offering was shed the fire came and consumed the sacrifice. Cain was wroth, and his countenance fell. If there had not been a visible sign, it is possible the countenance would not have fallen.

But there was to Abel something better than the ocular demonstration, for it is said, "God testified of his gifts, and he obtained witness that he was righteous." He became really and positively a righteous man by some wondrous and mysterious process such as the Divine Spirit does work upon human minds. Perhaps He is working it on yours just now. He does come down to those who look to Jesus, and through mystic, indescribable influences on the heart, changes the nature and transforms the man, and puts the badness down and brings in Christ; bears away corruption, pride, passion, hatred, wretchedness, and all the manifold base and dark affections of our fallen nature, and brings in blessing in the new fruits—peace, love, brotherly-kindness, charity, all the bright features of a renewed and happy man. Abel had witness that he was righteous. He became a new creature; and it was this gift of the Holy Ghost that made him righteous. He was born in sin quite as much as his brother Cain; they were both children of the same apostate parents; and the difference between them was the difference that grace made. And this is the only real difference. There may be a variety of outward manifestations of sin, but there never is any real difference till grace changes the heart, and there is in regeneration a true and positive righteousness. Morality has its place, and is better than immorality. Order and formalism are all better than loose, indifferent gracelessness; but you cannot reason yourself, sing yourself, pray yourself, reform yourself into Christ, unless you come to Him in faith, turning about from sin. Are you there? Then the change is passing upon you. It is imperceptible to all but yourself; but the working of your mind, at this moment, if you incline towards God, is beautiful, and makes angels sing. This good man came away from his sacrifice a new man, renewed in righteousness by the power of the Holy Ghost. May you have the same blessedness!

And then, observe, that with this witness there would also

be direct testimony of pardon and of acceptance. The two facts of pardon and renewal are inseparable in the work of salvation; but the two are distinct in thought. The pardon of a sinner is the alteration of his relative position. The enemy is made a friend; the alien is made a citizen; the outcast prodigal is made an accepted son. That is pardon. Righteousness, in the sense of regeneration, is the alteration of a man's evil state, so that the bad becomes good, the corrupt becomes holy, the child of darkness is made a child of light. But both the blessings go together. "He obtained witness that he was righteous." Where did he get it? Who *could* witness? Probably he was the only righteous man then living upon earth. We cannot say about his father; there is no record of that first apostate man. We hope he may have found mercy, but the Scripture records mention only this young son, probably the only living being then who had the witness that he was righteous. Cain had it not, but was full of envy and hatred. It is a blessing when our God works conversion, that others may say, "That is a good, changed man; his conduct and uprightness show that he is a man of God."

A witness of that kind is invaluable; but there is a higher and purer one, and Abel had that. He had the witness that he himself was righteous. Where did he get it? The text answers, "*God testified of His gifts.*" There is the same thought in the reference to Enoch, who before his translation "had this testimony, that he pleased God." How precious it is that we can look back here six thousand years, and find in the very first good man after the fall regard to this one great truth and doctrine which Paul the apostle and John the apostle have brought out with such great power. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." We have a clearer revelation of this privilege in New Testament times, but it was known at the beginning, and this blessed experience is for all who will give themselves up in a living, active, penitent faith to Christ. Do you know your sins forgiven? You hope they are. What sort of a hope is it? A vain, procrastinative hope. Do you know your sins forgiven? You think they are. What makes you

think so? What right have you to such a thought? Some of you rather say—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
 Oft it gives me anxious thought,
 Do I love the Lord or no?
 Am I His, or am I not?”

What would you think of that son or daughter saying—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
 Am I thine or am I not?”

The child doubting the father! That would be preposterous and paradoxical; and, depend upon it, it is the great and distinguished privilege of every man on earth to know his sins forgiven, to know it by a direct, immediate, heaven-sent testimony. The Spirit of God that never makes a mistake bears witness to the heart by an indescribable bliss, by the peace that the world cannot give and cannot take away, and by the shedding abroad of His love. The man by a direct witness of this sort knows that his sins are forgiven. The Lord did it really to many people when He was on earth. He said it in words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace;” “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” He does not now say it in words, but He says it with equal force, by the unmistakable attestations of His Holy Spirit. Thus God testifies of His gifts. Has He testified thus to you? He speaks to your heart. What voice is it that speaks? If you are coming “just as you are without one plea,” and if you are at Jesu’s feet, giving up all for Him, and are waiting, pleading, trusting there, look up, look out, expect that the Spirit will come as the God who testifies, that the fire will fall, and that the flame of love will be kindled in your waiting heart. May God give you the testimony that you are saved. Thus Abel obtained evidence of the Divine favour. The third thought is—

III. THAT THE FAITH AND EXAMPLE OF ABEL FURNISH IMPORTANT LESSONS TO MANKIND. The last clause of the verse says, “By it”—by the faith, or by the sacrifice?—“he being dead yet speaketh.” Here is a dead man speaking. “*He* being dead yet speaketh.” Voices! I am not dead yet; mine is a living voice. There are other voices than those of a human being, or of oral deliverances. There are voices of the eye, voices of the wind, voices of the ocean’s roar,

voices of angelic song. Eye speaks to eye. Mine speaks to you lovingly, and says, "Come to Jesus and live;" and there is as much voice in the eye to you, dear brother, dear sister, as there is in my tongue: "Come to Christ and live." And your eye seems to speak to me. I think I read in it, "I want Jesus; I should like to be saved; I want to know my sins forgiven." Does your voice say so?—your voice? There are many voices, and voices from many objects. Here is a voice—"He being dead yet speaketh." What speaks? Is Abel dead? So Paul says. He is bodily dead. The naughty brother struck him down to kill him; but is he dead? No; he is dead, but he is alive. Some say, but we do not confidently assert, that it was designed to awaken thought of the immortality of the soul, that this young man, fresh, hopeful, and good, was struck down, and his body was buried. His was the first disembodied and blood-washed spirit that entered the kingdom of heaven, the forerunner of unnumbered hosts of men who have died in Christ since; and now he speaks there before the throne of God, a living, triumphant believer. Was it a practical argument for the immortality of the soul? Perhaps so. It is fair enough to think so.

But the main idea here about the voice is that which we intimated at the commencement—the voice of blood. There is, in a subsequent chapter of the same epistle, a mysterious reference to this same Abel speaking. Paul, in describing the great hierarchy of heaven in the twelfth chapter, says to the living Church, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." There is a parallel and partly expository passage to our text: "He being dead yet speaketh." The blood of Jesus "speaketh better things than that of Abel." What is the manner of the speaking of Abel's blood? There are two opinions about this. One is that when Abel's blood was shed it cried for vengeance, and that when Jesus's blood was shed it cried for mercy; that the former said, "Vengeance upon my brother that struck me;" and that Jesus when He

died brought mercy to the human race. That is one thought. We doubt that. We rather think the superiority here has reference to the type and the antitype. I would rather plead for the idea that the young, good Abel was like his Lord and Master in his spirit and gentleness and temper, and that the blood, if it spoke at all, would say, "Pity my poor hardened brother; he lost his temper, and killed me; but pity him, pity him." I think if the blood of Abel spoke of vengeance, it was the typical blood; it was that which represented in some sort the death of the Lord Jesus. But whether or not, Abel's holy example, and his holy blood-shedding, his sacrifice, and his own death, all speak. And what is the voice of the whole but a confirmation of the one principle which has run through all our sermon, and which you find in all this Scripture, that you will never get to heaven, or have a renewed nature, or be a really saved man, till you apprehend with a contrite heart this one great thought that you *must* come down as a broken-hearted sinner, and plead the living sacrifice of Jesus's blood, and take it as your all in all.

The doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of the redemption by the death of Christ, is the doctrine taught by Abel. He yet speaks; for Jesus lives. That offering of Christ

"still continues new;

His vesture keeps its bloody hue."

And all who will consent to come to Christ thus shall be saved. He speaks. Thousands have heard His voice. Myriads have embraced Christ by this faith and now live.

If one might refer to the young man at home in heaven, one might almost think we have him speaking to you, young men, and saying, "Young man, if you want to pass through life safely, worship God, worship God in Christ. If you want to be an honoured, person, give yourself to offering to your Saviour the pure, penitent sacrifice of a trusting heart; and if you acknowledge Him in all your ways, He will direct your path."

It might be said, "But your religion, Abel, brought you to an early death." Yet it brought him to an early crown of glory; it brought him home to heaven. Better to die young and die in Christ, than live long and die in sin, and be lost for ever. He suffered for His religion, and so must every man that will have it and keep it. You will not keep

this living, humble, loving, self-denying, holy faith in this great metropolis without suffering for it. Depend upon it, any of you who resolve to be Christians will have to bear the scoff, the taunt, the envious eye, and perhaps the heavy blow. The early Christians all had to suffer. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. There must be suffering and resisting of temptation. Abel suffered, but he speaks and says, "A life of faith is better than a life of sin. My religion made me a new and happy man, and it has brought me up to heaven." It is a palpable, undeniable truth that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Will you have it? Will you have Christ to-day? The Lord dispose you to come and seek Him as your Saviour. He is not far from any one of you.

Let me not be considered obtrusive; but the soul of your preacher has been very much quickened this week. Last Sunday I preached at Tunstall, in the Potteries. There was a very blessed work of God. At the prayer-meeting afterwards some fourteen persons were brought to Christ. There was a good woman, good in that she was penitent, who came up the aisle and knelt at the communion, and just about the same time, unknown to her, the husband came up the other aisle and knelt down, and they were both led to Jesus. God saved them and saved others. May not some of you who have stayed in here to-night be drawn to the same decision? It was pleasing to observe those two faces, when they saw each other, and to hear the surprise of the wife, "What! is it my husband?" and the equal surprise of the husband, "What! is it my wife?" Oh! what a heaven for them both, and what a happy house! How they would go home blessing and praising God, the two starting for heaven that day. Will you do the same? The Lord move you to it!

At Loughborough last Tuesday night, most unexpectedly to me preaching on like this, there rose up out of one of the pews three young ladies, who walked away to the communion of their own accord, and knelt there in penitence. They were followed by several others, and I was obliged to give up the train and home for that night, and stay and plead with those who were broken down and wanted to come to Christ. Blessed be God! And now I have come here in the hope

that God may move some of you to the same Saviour. May He do so! We saw blessed works of God amongst some London congregations a generation ago. O for the same searching! O that the blessed Spirit may come down again! You are another race, with the exception of a few grey heads that I see, one here and another there that were young and vigorous formerly. Nearly all are gone. "My company before is gone." I am a stranger now and must soon go myself, and I should like to take some of you with me to heaven to-night. The Lord incline you! You are of another race, but Abel's God will be yours, and the witness that he had of pardon and righteousness may be yours. May you claim it! Come to-day. Let this passing visit of a stranger prove to be the time of your espousals to Christ, your decision for heaven. The Lord can make it so. Come, fall in. Give your heart to God. Put fear, and shame, and doubt, and procrastination all away, and say, "I will come to Christ to-night;" say, "I will give to Christ my heart." Amen. Will you? will you? The Lord move you to it. Do not let me close until there is on some of your minds the decisive word, "I will be God's to-day. I will decide for Christ to-day." Amen. May you be moved to it! The blessing of God be on you, and then your faith, like Abel's faith, shall have God's testimony of favour, and you will join the first believer ere long, and be with him in the kingdom of his Father's glory. The Lord bless and save you! Amen.

Thank God, thank God I have preached Christ to you again! Another casting in of the net. O that it may be on the right side of the ship. I do not look to cast the net many times more, and I thank God I have had one more opportunity. O that some of you may be gathered to Christ to-day!

Forgive me for thus breaking out again. You must be saved. You cannot bear devouring fire. Oh, do decide, for your soul's sake, for Christ's sake, for Heaven's sake. Your chief pastor, Mr. Walton, said, "Perhaps you will get some souls, if you will go to London for me." Well, I hope so. The Lord give me you. For His Church, for His grace, for His heaven, the Lord save you! Amen.

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